Commentary

Volume Seventy-six, Number Five, November 1983

Soviet Apologists: Then and Now

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The Last Great Yiddish Poet?
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It's Only Culture
Joseph Epstein

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Writer at Work—A Story
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Woody Allen on the American Character
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BOOKS:
Norman Podhoretz on William F. Buckley, Jr.

Daniel Pipes
Rita Kramer
Robert Alter
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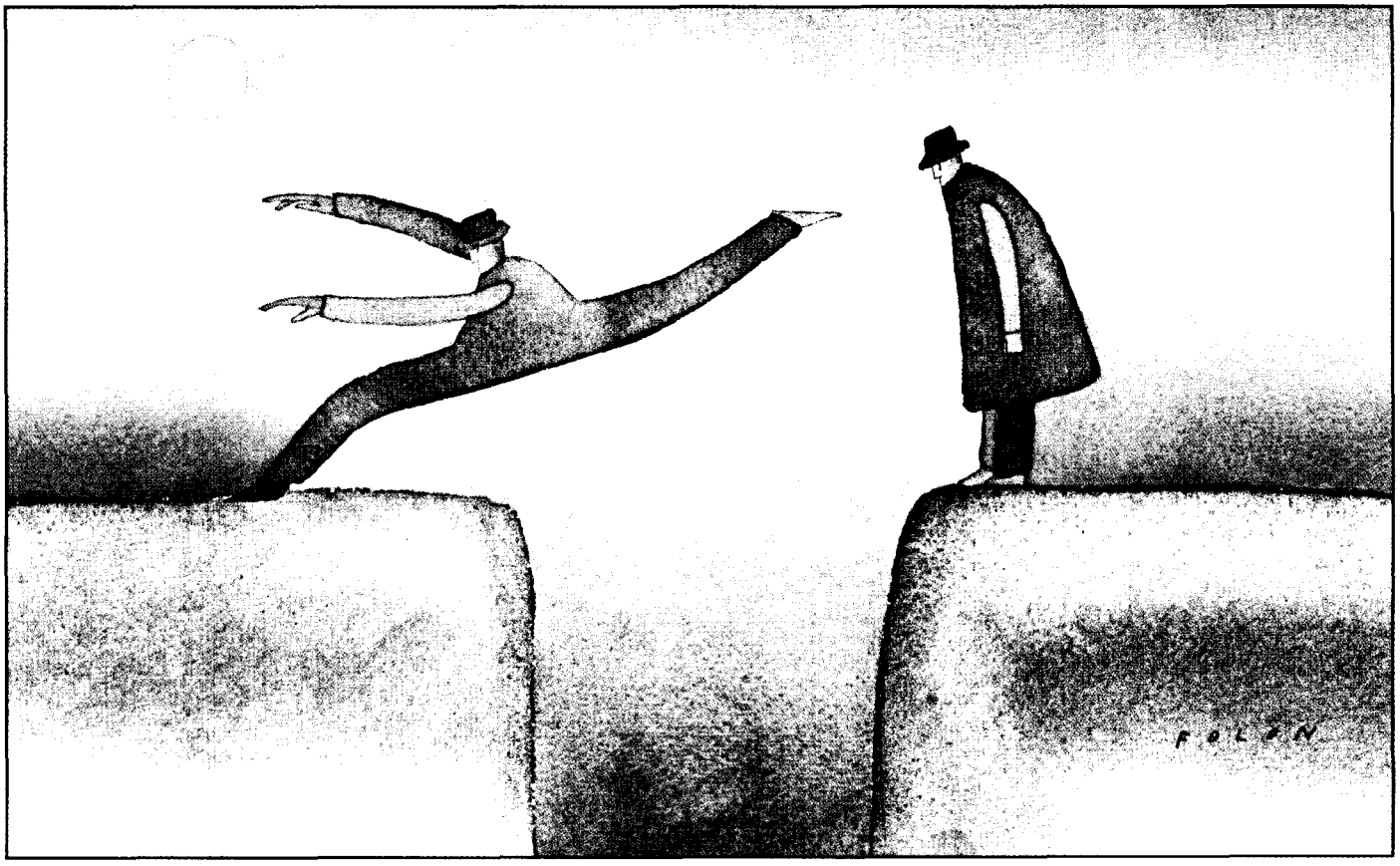
NUCLEAR ENERGY
Are we being left behind?



Twenty-five countries now produce nuclear-generated electricity. Ten more plan to do so by the end of the decade. The international growth of this energy source raises questions about what, if anything, America stands to lose if we fall behind in nuclear energy development.

America helped pioneer the technology of the world's nuclear plants. Nuclear-generated electricity in the U.S. grew to a record 283 billion kilowatt-hours last year—close to 13 percent of the nation's total electricity production. Eighty-four plants are now licensed to operate across the country, and 56 more are being built. In terms of total nuclear electric generating capacity, America remains number one.

But since 1978, we have undergone a time of national hesitation. For five years now, no new nuclear power plants have been ordered in the U.S. During the same period, there have been orders for at least 40 such plants in other parts of the world, even with the global economic slump.

The international rise of nuclear electricity

France, the Soviet Union, and Japan are among the many countries committed to nuclear electricity as an economic, secure alternative to oil-fired and coal-fired power.

By 1985, over half of France's electricity will be nuclear-generated. The cost of producing a nuclear kilowatt-hour in France is 25 percent cheaper than with coal and 55 percent cheaper than with oil. It takes only six years or so to get a nuclear plant built there.

Belgium, Finland, France, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and West Germany all generate a greater share of their electricity from nuclear power plants than the U.S.

Japan's ambitious nuclear construction program

When the 1973 oil embargo struck, over 80 percent of Japan's oil was coming from the Middle East. To reduce such vulnerability, Japan decided to accelerate its nuclear power program.

Japan now operates 25 nuclear units, and expects to double its nuclear capacity by 1990. Japanese companies are busy designing their own advanced reactors, and thus gaining the edge in nuclear energy technology.

And despite Japan's recent economic slowdown, there have been no cancellations of nuclear plants under construction there.

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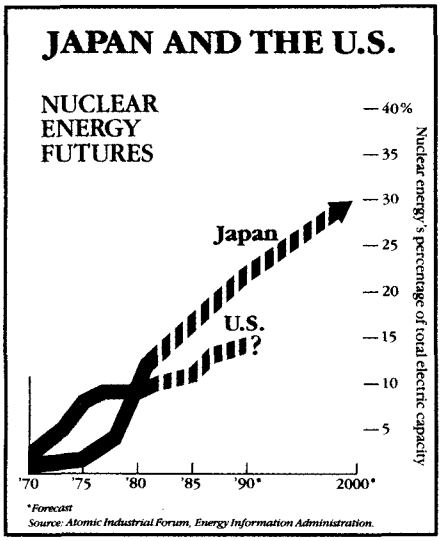


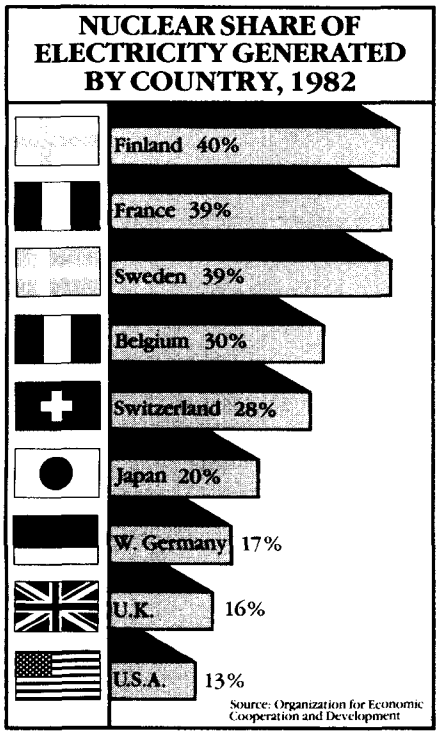
Japan now has a larger percentage of nuclear-electricity production capacity (as a share of total electricity production capacity) than does the U.S. And Japan's nuclear capacity is expected to grow rapidly.

A secure America needs a balanced mix of energy sources

This country has a lot more oil, natural gas, and coal than either France or Japan. But oil supplies are uncertain. Natural gas is more valuable for other uses than for burning in power plants. And coal, though essential, can't be expected to do the job alone.

Some of the renewable energy options are promising, but they're still drops in the national energy bucket.

What is best for the practical generation of large amounts of electricity? The National Academy of Sciences has stated that "Coal and nuclear power are the only economic alternatives for large-scale application in the remainder of this century."



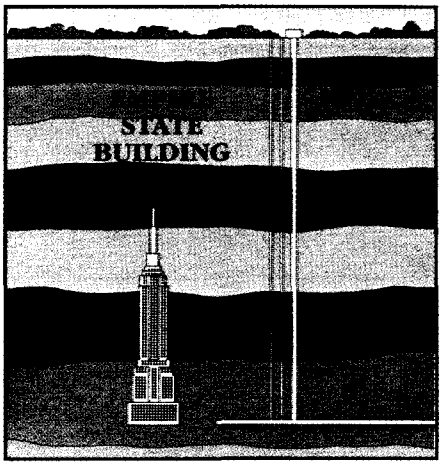
In many countries throughout the world, nuclear power is now supplying a substantial share of the electricity that people consume.

Highest safety standards and a U.S. plan for nuclear waste

The accident at Three Mile Island prompted reforms in safety, nuclear regulation, and plant operations. Since that time, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the utility industry itself have made nuclear energy the most carefully controlled technology in the country. It has one of the best safety records of any major industrial enterprise.

In 1979, U.S. nuclear electric utilities founded the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations. Based in Atlanta, INPO focuses on the human factor of nuclear plant safety. The Institute monitors plants in operation and under construction, and accredits operator training programs to assure that the highest standards are met.

Besides plant safety, another big concern has been nuclear waste. An important step toward solving the waste problem is the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, signed into law early this year. The Act defines a timetable and Federal responsibility for the safe and permanent disposal of high-level waste, in deep geologic formations that have been stable for millions of years. In 1987, the President is to recommend to Congress the first U.S. disposal site.



The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 directs the Federal government to begin the process leading to the permanent disposal of high-level nuclear waste, in deep geologic formations that have been stable for millions of years. These permanent repositories will be almost twice as deep as the Empire State Building is high.

The geologic disposal method has been judged the safest by many governments and scientific bodies. They agree that repositories deep underground can isolate the waste permanently. West Germany is now drilling to test the suitability of the salt formation at Gorleben. Canada's research and development is focusing on the ancient rock formations of the Canadian Shield plateau. And Switzerland favors disposal in rock far beneath the northern part of the Swiss lowlands.

The cost of not pushing ahead

Nuclear-generated electricity is a secure, dependable, economic energy source for millions of people in many different countries. And they plan to use more of it in the years to come.

As its use grows, nuclear electricity will help these countries strengthen their position in increasingly competitive world markets. They realize that a healthy national economy needs a healthy supply of energy.

Will we have to play a costly game of catch-up in the competition ahead? America runs the risk of doing just that—if we ignore the growing international reliance on nuclear energy, and the reasons behind that growth.

This is one in a continuing series of discussions about nuclear electricity. For a free booklet that covers the subject in more detail, just fill out this coupon and mail it to:

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Commentary

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In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

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Letters from Readers

Willy Brandt

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Whatever Happened to Willy Brandt?" [July], David Gress sets out to explain how Willy Brandt, once a "democratic anti-Communist," turned into an "appeaser" and "neutralist." These are indeed serious charges to make, in the columns of a serious American magazine, against a long-proven friend of the Western alliance and of the United States, who is also chairman of a German party—the Social Democrats—which has succeeded in condemning the Communists to virtual nonexistence in the German Federal Republic for more than three decades. Such charges, moreover, are hardly likely to overcome the present disagreements between German democrats of the moderate Left and American political leaders of the not-so-moderate Right. I am writing to remind Mr. Gress of the saying of a famous Danish philosopher: "Never try to explain a phenomenon until you have made quite sure that it exists." For the appeaser and neutralist Willy Brandt does not exist. As I propose to show, the claim that he does is based on woolly concepts and slipshod treatment of facts.

Let me take the concepts first. I should think that an appeaser is someone who accepts the use of force by another power or the results of the use of force, though he has the means to prevent or undo them. Brandt is accused of having "urged recognition and acceptance of Communist conquests" because he based his *Ostpolitik* of the 70's on the post-World War II division of Europe and Germany. Even Mr. Gress would agree that Brandt did not have the power to undo this state of affairs; he himself mentions that the European status quo had long since been accorded de-facto acceptance by the Western powers, including the United States, and suggests that Brandt conceived his new policy only when he became fully aware of this fact, after the American non-reaction to the building of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961. But, though unable to undo the territorial status quo (which even the Western powers could not have done without risking nuclear war), Brandt did *not* "accept" that this meant the total separation of Germans East and West of the border, as his predecessors in the West German government had done. With the support of the Western allies, Brandt negotiated treaties with the Soviet Union, Poland, and East Germany based on the territorial status quo; he thus created relations with these governments as normal as those his Western allies already had (except in the case of East Germany), and made it possible for millions of West Germans to visit their relatives and friends in the East. The treaties also freed the people of Poland and Czechoslovakia from the fear of "German revanchism" which had been one of the wellsprings of Communist influence (and though Communist-inspired, had proved very effective). Some appeasement!

Let me now turn to the charge of neutralism. A neutralist, I should think, is someone who, in a world divided by a profound conflict not only between opposing powers but between opposing principles, tries to keep his country out of the conflict, or if it is already part of an alliance, to take it out of the alliance. Our world is divided by such a profound conflict, and the Federal Republic of Germany is part of the Atlantic alliance, but Willy Brandt never for a single moment suggested that it should leave.

Mr. Gress sees the seeds of neutralism in the formula of Brandt's friend Egon Bahr, *"Wandel durch Annäherung,"* which he mistranslates as "change by convergence," whereas it actually means change by rapprochement. Bahr's idea was that internal changes in the Soviet bloc could be brought about by normalization of *foreign relations* between the opposing alliances, not by *internal* changes in the West (which is what convergence would mean). The idea proved in part realistic, in part illusory: realistic in that the declining fear of Germany, brought about by Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, was a precondition for the Prague Spring of 1968 and the Polish movements of 1970, 1976, and 1980-82; illusory in that the Soviet Union was determined not to tolerate major internal changes within its empire, and was strong enough to stop them. But it is simply not true that Bahr's formula was at any time a "euphemism for the mutual neutralization and final

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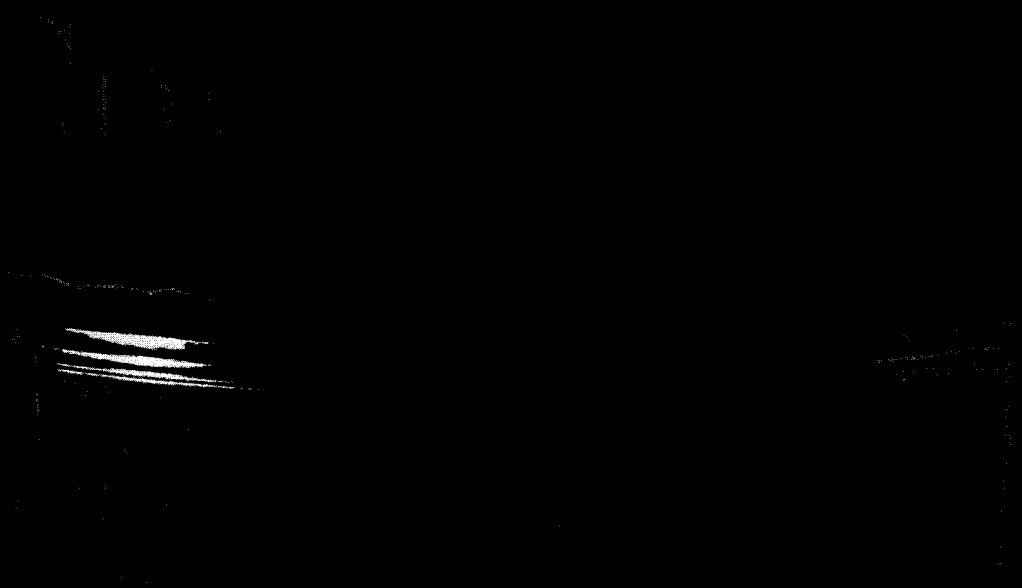
The taste is extravagant. The price, merely indulgent.



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Answers to the

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most asked questions about cigarettes.

As a matter of policy. No. As a matter of practice. No. As a matter of fact. No!

The unfortunate fact is that some kids do smoke. But, while cigarette sales continue to increase, fewer teenagers are smoking. For example, according to the American Cancer Society, smoking among young women has decreased 17 percent since 1974.

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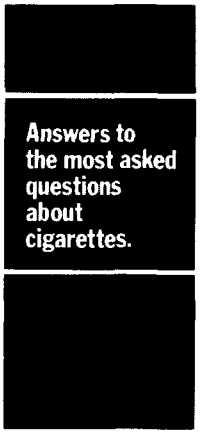
In our view, smoking is an adult custom and the decision to smoke should be based on mature and informed individual freedom of choice.

For more information, write for our booklet, "Answers to the most asked questions about cigarettes." Address: The Tobacco Institute, Suite 810D, 1875 Eye Street, Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20006. We offer it in the belief that full and free discussion of these important public issues is in the public interest.



WEIGH BOTH SIDES BEFORE YOU TAKE SIDES.

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confederation of the two Germanys." Brandt and all his aides, including Bahr, have long been convinced that the partition of Germany could not be overcome while the partition of Europe persisted, and that so long as the Soviet Union was able to hold its empire together, it would never release East Germany—not even as a price for West German neutralization. Brandt and his aides know that while a Soviet empire exists, there has got to be a Western alliance, and that West Germany, to survive as a free country, must be part of it.

The idea of "Brandt, the neutralist" has lately received considerable currency in the West as a result of the criticism of the Reagan administration's foreign and military policy by Brandt and his Social Democratic party (SPD). In particular, their doubts about the American conduct of the negotiations on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Reduction (INF) in Geneva are seen as proof that Brandt and the SPD are as critical of Germany's American allies as they are of its Soviet antagonists—or perhaps even more critical!

Three remarks are necessary to correct this impression. First, the need to reply to the threat of the Soviet SS-20's was first brought to the attention of NATO by the German Social Democratic Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, and it was his initiative that led to the "two-track" decision. Second, the SPD backed that policy at two successive party congresses, and Brandt, far from "undermining" Schmidt on this point, supported him both times. Third, in the course of the last year both the Social Democrats in general and Brandt in particular have indeed become increasingly critical of the American conduct of the negotiations, without becoming in the least uncritical of the Russian position. But in an alliance among democracies, public criticism of the policy of one ally by sectors of opinion of another is normal and inevitable, and has nothing to do with a "neutralist" wish to leave the alliance. Brandt himself forcefully made this point in a recent article in the Washington *Post*: according to the latest polls, 90 percent of the West German voters support the alliance, but 65 percent oppose the stationing of new missiles on West German soil. Whatever those figures may mean—and they may still change considerably if the negotiations result in an agreement that brings about partial stationing, or if they fail despite great and visible efforts on the part of the U.S. to reach agreement—they do *not* mean that 65 percent of the West Germans are neutralists.

There is no space to deal with all the detailed errors of fact in Mr. Gress's article, but I wish to correct at least one injustice to President Kennedy, one to Chancellor Schmidt, and one particularly galling one to Willy Brandt. Mr. Gress has fallen for the legend that Khrushchev's Berlin crisis ended after the wall was built and the exodus of East German refugees stopped. That was indeed what some American diplomats believed at the time, but they were wrong. The crisis was started by Khrushchev *before* the exodus of refugees had become really dangerous for the GDR, and the exodus became threatening only as a result of the crisis. When the wall went up, Khrushchev was not yet content, but increased his forces along the highways and air routes to Berlin in 1962. The real goal of the crisis was to force either a U.S. abandonment of Berlin or a U.S. negotiation with the GDR about access routes without West German consent; this would have led in either case to a crisis of the American-German alliance. But when Kennedy, after an initial hesitation, refused to yield and strengthened U.S. forces in Germany too, Khrushchev engaged in the adventure of putting pressure on the U.S. nearer home—by stationing missiles in Cuba. Only when that adventure failed was the Berlin crisis over as well. The Berliners understood this at once, which is why Kennedy's visit in the spring of 1963 was more than "theater." He could not prevent the wall from being built, but he did save the free part of the city—and much more.

Mr. Gress also tells us that Helmut Schmidt, in 1981, "was virtually congratulating Jaruzelski on the crackdown in Poland." But he does not mention that immediately on his return to Bonn, Schmidt made a speech to the Bundestag resulting in the first official resolution of solemn protest against Jaruzelski's action in Poland by *any* Western country.

Finally, he charges Willy Brandt with having carried with him, during "his physical and metaphorical pilgrimages to Moscow, Warsaw, East Berlin, and Prague," not only recognition of the status quo, but "confessions of guilt for centuries of exploitation, pillage, and oppression perpetrated by Germans on Slavs and culminating in World War II." I believe it is sheer invention to say that Brandt *ever* made confessions of German guilt for centuries past. But there was one incident which made one of these visits truly a pilgrimage, and which was the most solemn expression ever of German consciousness of *Hitler's* guilt: Brandt's kneeling in front of the Warsaw Ghetto memorial. His Communist hosts did not like it, and Mr. Gress did not think of it, but there are many people who will not forget it as long as they live.

RICHARD LOWENTHAL
Berlin, West Germany

DAVID GRESS writes:

Richard Lowenthal wishes to deny that Willy Brandt, with whom, in terms of the internal struggle in the SPD, he is hardly in agreement, is now or ever was either an appeaser of Soviet power or a neutralist. As Mr. Lowenthal himself points out, however, such matters are largely ones of definition and preference: one man's appeasement may be another's realism. In fact, by his definition, Mr. Lowenthal has neatly made it appear that, far from being an appeaser, Brandt has in fact been a realist. An appeaser, says Mr. Lowenthal, is "someone who accepts the use of force by another power or the results of the use of force, *though he has the means to prevent or undo them*" (emphasis added), whereas Brandt was in fact unable to overthrow the East German regime or to undo the territorial expansion of Soviet power. Hence Brandt's official recognition of these facts in the period from 1969 to 1972 was not appeasement, though it granted a long-standing Soviet wish, but realism. Nor was it "acceptance," since, according to Mr. Lowenthal, Brandt "made it possible for millions of West Germans to visit their relatives and friends in the East."

Mr. Lowenthal, then, sees détente purely in material terms: how many West-East entry permits granted, how many phone lines installed, etc.? But surely this is a very poor and narrow definition for a Social Democrat, for whom,

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THE FIRST AMENDMENT v. UNION POLITICAL SPENDING

The First Amendment was written nearly 200 years ago to protect the right of all Americans to freely express their own opinions—and the right not to support opinions with which they disagree.

But despite the First Amendment, one group in America has the power to force men and women to financially support political causes and candidates they oppose—or lose their jobs. That group is organized labor.

Federal labor law as well as some state laws permit unions and employers to require working Americans to pay union dues as a condition of employment, regardless of whether or not they want to join or support a union. As a result, the AFL-CIO and member unions collect more than $3.5 billion per year—$10 million a day—in compulsory dues.

This massive amount of union treasury money, often called "soft money," cannot be used for direct cash contributions to candidates for federal office. But federal election law permits the use of "soft money" for a host of union activities for candidates, political parties, referendums and ideological causes.

And spend it the unions do. Political historian Theodore White called the AFL-CIO political effort in 1968 "unprecedented in American history." It included, for example, the registration of 4.6 million voters, the printing and distribution of 115 million pamphlets and leaflets, telephone banks in 638 localities, 72,225 house-to-house canvassers, and nearly 100,000 volunteers on election day.

Labor columnist Victor Riesel estimates that the cost of organized labor's unreported "in-kind" political activities in 1976 was over $100 million. Allowing for inflation and the dramatic increase in union political action, that figure could top $150 million in 1984.

In response, more and more union members are speaking out against the flagrant abuse of their First Amendment rights, looking to the nation's courts for help.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the use of compulsory union dues for political, ideological and other non-collective bargaining activities is unconstitutional, violating employees' First Amendment rights. But some courts have strayed badly in their interpretation of the legal precedents.

This fall, the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation will seek from the Supreme Court a strict definition of collective bargaining and a uniform remedy to protect the constitutional rights of American workers against the use of their compulsory dues for union political spending. **(Ellis/Fails v. Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks)**

The issue is clear, the abuse widespread. Rank and file workers, especially those who choose not to become union members, have little or no say as to which candidates and causes their money is used to support.

As a federal appeals court has stated, this wholesale violation of employees' First Amendment rights damages workers twice: They are forced to "contribute" to political candidates they oppose, and their ability to finance candidates they do support is thereby severely diminished.

Nearly 200 years ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote: "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical."

Unhappily, such tyranny prevails in America today in the form of union political spending financed by compulsory union dues. This tyranny can only be eliminated by the combined action of an informed press, an aroused citizenry and a responsible judiciary.

If you would like further information about this fundamental abuse of the First Amendment, please write us for a copy of our pamphlet, "The First Amendment vs. Union Political Spending: A 26-Year Legal Battle for Employees' Political Freedom", and more information about the landmark case, **Ellis/Fails v. BRAC.** Or call Joanna Boyce at 800-336-3600.

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as Sidney Hook has reminded us, "freedom comes first." At stake in Germany is not only the survival of the democratic constitutional state in the West, but the obligation, contained in the Federal Republic's Basic Law of 1949, to pursue freedom for those Germans who have had an illegal and illegitimate regime imposed on them by alien coercion. Ex-post-facto recognition of that regime grants it undeserved moral status, presumptively violates the charge of the Basic Law, and confuses the political instincts of one's own compatriots in free Germany. Travel permits and phone lines are part of a set of unilaterally revocable concessions which the Eastern regime blatantly uses to extort tribute in the form of the "swing," the ransom for political prisoners ($10,000-$200,000 at current rates), and the *Zwangsumtausch* or forced daily exchange of 75 marks per person while in East Germany. Such measures do not promote freedom, but endanger it, by satisfying Eastern demands and thus provoking more. No real concessions, such as ending the automatic *Schiessbefehl* or "shoot-to-kill command" which is strictly enforced along the East-West border, the so-called "death zone," have ever been obtained from the East.

It is astonishing in this connection that Mr. Lowenthal should claim that Brandt's *Ostpolitik* was of more help to the victims of Eastern tyranny than Konrad Adenauer's "policy of strength." Adenauer, who knew far better than Brandt what sort of men the Soviet leaders were, obtained more concessions on his visit to Moscow in 1955 than Brandt ever did, notably the release of surviving German POW's and other German nationals in Soviet hands. It is true that fifteen years ago détente was supposed to contribute to democracy in the East and to a "loosening of the blocs." Certain incorrigibles still repeat such clichés today, after all the intervening years of experience, but Mr. Lowenthal should not have to associate himself with such non-arguments.

As for neutralism: if I shared Mr. Lowenthal's belief that Brandt and his aides realize that the Soviet Union "would never release East Germany—not even as a price for West German neutralization" and that "while a Soviet empire exists, there has got to be a Western alliance," I would not have written my article or compiled the much more extensive material on which it was based. My worry is that Brandt today no longer agrees that the division of Germany is the absolute enemy of anyone who professes to be a West German democrat and that recognition of the division in any form is tantamount to a legitimation of tyranny and oppression. His refusal, as chairman of the Socialist International, to sponsor resolutions condemning Castro's regime and its concentration camps is indicative, in my view, of his current priorities, which are not those of traditional social democracy.

Finally, the notorious missiles. According to Mr. Lowenthal, Brandt is not a neutralist because he has pointed out publicly that 65 percent of West Germans opposed INF modernization in a recent poll. But if so many Germans do not understand that INF modernization is a precondition of continued stability on the central front and is necessary to maintain a deterrent to the Soviet Union, this is partly attributable to a shocking failure to inform them of these facts by party leaders, including Brandt. Further, in an interview in *Die Zeit* early this year, Brandt not only expressed great personal sympathy for the "Greens" and the "peace movement," but actually granted them legitimacy by saying that "it can hardly be bad that so many young Germans today march for peace." But the point, of course, is that they are marching not for peace in any politically acceptable interpretation of the term, but for a policy of confrontation with their own and allied governments and abject appeasement of the East. Any analysis of their pamphlets, banners, slogans, and statements clearly shows that their hatred and fear are directed solely at American missiles, which do not yet exist, and not against Soviet missiles, which do. As he must surely know this, Brandt's expressions of friendship with people whose actions threaten peace and survival are, at best, irresponsible.

In conclusion, let me say that I am not surprised, but perhaps a little pained, to see Mr. Lowenthal, who has been a stout defender of reason and enlightenment in the SPD, though many of its members seem to have forgotten the party's commitment to these principles, repeat the routine charges of the European Left against an alleged warmongering Right in Washington and its supposed lack of good faith in negotiations. It is truly incredible that responsible politicians across the spectrum in Western Europe can repeatedly urge the American INF negotiating team to go back to the proposals made in 1982, as though these had been first rejected not by Moscow, but by Washington! It does seem that such politicians are less interested in the reality of the negotiations and the strategic necessities for them than in saving their own credentials with the dominant anti-INF current of opinion. Opportunistic, but not respectable.

Anti-Capitalism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Epstein, in your pages, has abused his position as editor of the *American Scholar*. In his essay, "The Education of an Anti-Capitalist" [August], he says he spoke "over the telephone with a philosopher who had sent an essay to the *American Scholar* (of which I am the editor) about intellectuals and capitalism." Mr. Epstein says he found the essay interesting but was unpersuaded; he goes on to offer a two-paragraph summary of the essay and a one-paragraph rebuttal of its argument, all by way of introducing his own memoir.

I am the author of that essay, submitted to the *American Scholar* several months ago. During the telephone conversation with Mr. Epstein, though I disagreed with his criticisms, I said that some rewriting might make it clearer why these criticisms didn't apply and that I probably would send to him the rewritten version for reconsideration for publication. (I do not wish to discuss here the substance of my essay; its readers, when it appears, will be able to decide for themselves whether Mr. Epstein's summary and criticisms are apt.)

Perhaps Mr. Epstein begins his memoir with a summary and criticism of my essay as a way of acknowledging that reading my essay stimulated his. But Mr. Epstein did not ask my permission to summarize my unpublished essay which he was sent in his editorial capacity; he did not write to ask if I still planned to publish my essay and wished him to delay publishing his discussion of it until after mine had appeared; he did not send me a copy of his essay in advance or give me any indication that he planned to make

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his own use of my material which he had received and rejected as editor of the *American Scholar*.

My essay, it should be said, did not arrive at the *American Scholar* from out of the blue. In a letter to me of August 9, 1982, on *American Scholar* stationery listing him as editor, Mr. Epstein wrote to me the following letter. (I wouldn't normally quote in print a letter someone has written to me, but given its official character and given the ensuing events I trust its publication will be seen to be appropriate.)

> I have been reading *Philosophical Explanations* with great pleasure, and wanted, first, to tell what pleasure the book has given me, and, second, to invite you to write for the *American Scholar*. Is there, I wonder, something you are working on at the moment that might be suitable for the *American Scholar*? Is there something you might like to set to work on with the magazine in mind? Do let me hear from you about this. I am very keen on having you write something for us.

No doubt, there are some intricate issues in delineating how and when an editor/writer may utilize a knowledge of manuscripts he has gained through exercise of his office. However, the present case is not a complicated borderline case. It is simply an egregious abuse of editorial office. It seems to me that Mr. Epstein owes me an apology in these pages.

I am puzzled about why COMMENTARY's editors, who participated in Mr. Epstein's actions by printing his essay, did not exercise more editorial control. (Perhaps they or Mr. Epstein believed writers were entitled only to the minimal protection of not being named as authors of rejected manuscripts, but even then, since my ideas were being summarized, shouldn't I have been asked which I preferred, anonymity or attribution? And after my essay was published elsewhere, couldn't people then put two and two together to infer that it had been previously rejected by the *American Scholar*?) Did COMMENTARY's editors raise any questions with Mr. Epstein about the propriety of his action or do they endorse his practice as perfectly proper? Must potential contributors to COMMENTARY also worry, as potential contributors to the *American Scholar* now must, that, without permission or consultation, their ideas may be summarized and criticized before appearing in print?

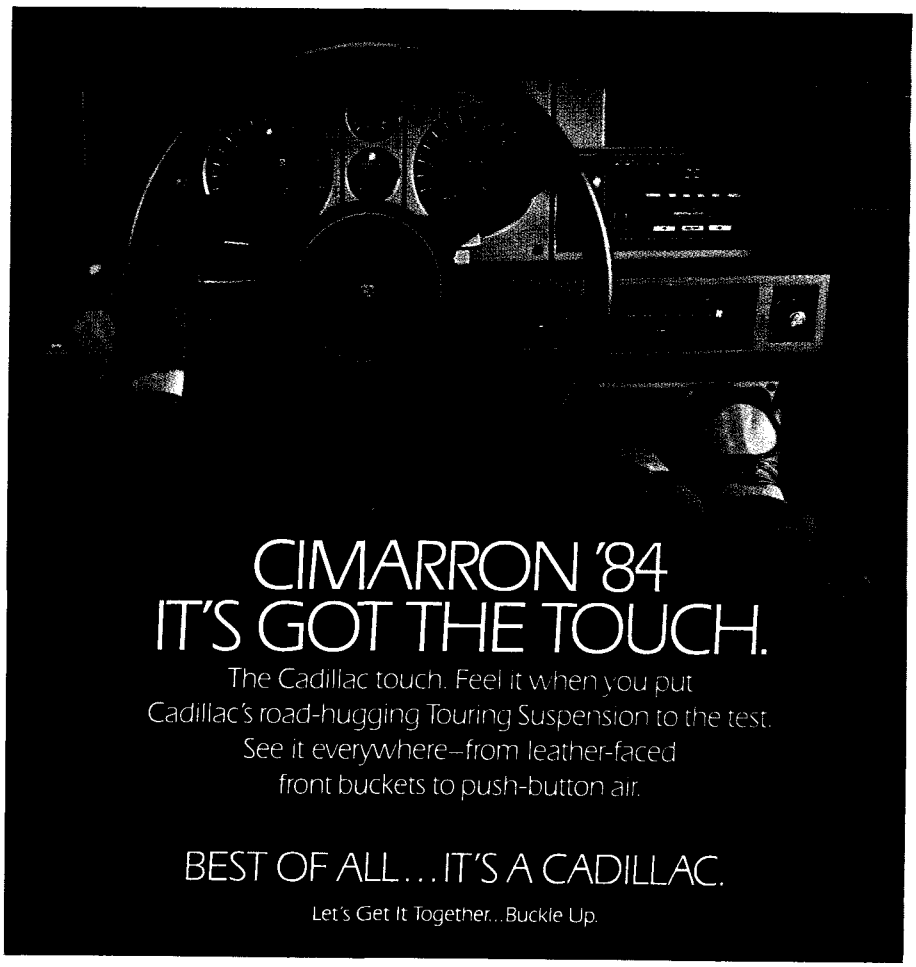
ROBERT NOZICK
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Epstein is certainly a sly one when it comes to distorting the words of others for his own purposes. His contribution to the August issue provides new evidence of this, supporting the complaint of your correspondent Ruth Miller in the same issue. Mr. Epstein's article, "The Education of an Anti-Capitalist," opens with a reference to "a letter that the sociologist Dennis H. Wrong wrote to this magazine indicating that I had betrayed the cause, given up the fight, and gone over to the enemy. 'Retreated' was the word Wrong used."

My letter mentioned Mr. Epstein only incidentally and merely noted that he had changed his political views since 1973. What I wrote was: ". . . nearly a decade ago Joseph Epstein attacked [the neoconservatives], singling out COMMENTARY, as 'intellectuals in retreat,' but Mr. Epstein has since decided to retreat himself and become a COMMENTARY regular." "Retreated" was Mr. Epstein's own word, not mine, as he insists a second time in the last paragraph of his August article. He used the word in the very title of the earlier article to which I referred: "The New Conservatives: Intellectuals in Retreat," *Dissent*, Spring 1973, pp. 151-62.

No doubt Mr. Epstein will dismiss this as he did Ruth Miller's complaint as a pedantic quibble. I dislike, however, being accused of something I have always detested, namely, the habit of some people who identify with "the Left" of charging those who shift to more conservative opinions with having "sold out." I detest equally the habit of some conservatives of claiming that intellectuals who hold "left-wing" views do so because they resent the wealth and power of businessmen or out of craven conformity to the allegedly conventional beliefs of the academic intelligentsia. Mr. Epstein rejects the first *argumentum ad*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hominem, but heartily endorses the second, confessing that he himself once fell prey to it but has now courageously become an independent thinker in daring to find virtues in capitalism.

I must say that Mr. Epstein's 1973 *Dissent* article did not strike me, then or now, as being suffused with the "anti-capitalist" and "anti-American" outlook he says he cherished during his years as a conformist intellectual. His major targets in the article were Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, and Daniel P. Moynihan (not yet a Senator). While praising them for their opposition to the New Left, he observed that since the disappearance of that short-lived political tendency their attitudes had hardened into a rigid ideological stance—"intellectual monomania," he called it—that seemed to deny that there were any real social problems in America at all requiring even modest efforts at reform. He has now evidently persuaded himself that any preoccupation with what he described ten years ago as "millions of people in America still living quite wretchedly, and the conditions of others worsening" is necessarily anti-capitalist, and anti-American as well since "the logic of anti-capitalism ends, inevitably, in anti-Americanism." Even attacks on "cultural philistinism" are by definition anti-capitalist and anti-American. I do not recall seeing so total an identification of America and all it contains with capitalism outside of the ranks of the most doctrinaire Marxists.

I also find it rather surprising to be told that the real enemy was always capitalism, and, inferentially, America, for writers and intellectuals as diverse as Edmund Wilson, Alfred Kazin, George Orwell, John Maynard Keynes, Paul Goodman, Lewis Coser, Irving Howe, and Dwight Macdonald, none of whom was, or is, a doctrinaire Marxist committed to the view that no improvements in the human condition are possible short of the abolition of capitalism. But then Mr. Epstein thinks that reading Aristotle, Plato, Thucydides, Freud, and Dostoevsky induces "antipathy to business" and, as B follows A, to America. Whether these views represent a retreat or an advance when compared with Mr. Epstein's earlier ones, I confess that I find them intellectually gross.

DENNIS H. WRONG
Princeton, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

What is this? Joseph Epstein pauses in a long-winded explication of his personal journey toward capitalism to take a gratuitous slap at William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *National Review*? Perhaps now that he has come to see the value of Buckley's economics he will attempt to grasp Buckley's manners. Back in those days when Mr. Epstein was lost in the ardors of *gauchisme*, *National Review* was fighting the good fight and almost alone. Now that Mr. Epstein has come to see the light, it ill behooves him to scorn *National Review* on the grounds of taste.

R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.
American Spectator
Bloomington, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Epstein's "The Education of an Anti-Capitalist" . . . is intended to chronicle the painful journey from shallow radicalism to a more mature acceptance (embrace?) of the status quo. Indeed, Mr. Epstein manages to summarize the entire corpus of what might be termed (*pace* Hugh Hefner) the COMMENTARY Philosophy. Thus, those obstinately adhering to outworn radical shibboleths are indicted on familiar counts of elitism, dogmatism, and anti-Americanism. . . .

Mr. Epstein's academic friend Jack is cited as typifying the radical intellectual breed. Like Mr. Epstein himself, Jack "has no real training in economics," so that "his dislike of capitalism begins and ends in aesthetics." Poor fellow—outside his area of intellectual expertise (English literature, perhaps?), Jack is obviously a naif and a dilettante whose social marginality explains his need for radical "crutches." . . .

Yet Mr. Epstein's analysis is noteworthy—if only because its many confusions and contradictions confirm the writer's own alienation from that real-life travail endured by millions of his fellow citizens. Thus, one can only puzzle over the claim that pollution is an "aesthetic" problem—certainly I have never encountered any serious person who couched it, exclusively or primarily, in those terms, for what is really at issue is the health and welfare of the average person. Similarly, who would regard failure to provide decent jobs at decent pay—indeed, to provide any jobs at all for 10 percent of the work force—as an "aesthetic" issue?

Finally, while there is much laughable hyperbole in Mr. Epstein's analysis (e.g., his extraordinarily ill-informed remarks on higher education), his real zinger is the contention "that if you are against capitalism, you have also to be, in a spiritual sense, against America, the capitalist country *par excellence*." Dr. Johnson would have known what to make of such a comment. As for myself, like most other radicals, I will continue to be "against capitalism" precisely because I am "for" America.

DAVID H. KATZ
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It has been my experience that writers educated by the University of Chicago (or teaching there) require a secret reading. Not that they should be read on the sly, though this is sometimes advisable. Rather, they like to present their real message hidden within a public or explicit one. The implicit or secret teaching can be divined only by very careful readers, for whom, of course, the hidden teaching was all the while intended. . . .

Mr. Epstein argues on the surface that he simply became a critic of the new conventional wisdom which had become anti-capitalist. No, it's more complicated than that. The key (or "major key," as Henry James would say) is the frequency of Mr. Epstein's joke-telling. He gets off at least forty-seven, some at others' expense (such as the poor soul who was led to believe that Trotsky never tipped—and the untipped victims of this poor soul's credulity), and all the more telling, in their quiet way, for that reason.

These jokes indicate that Mr. Epstein's turning away from anti-capitalism has much to do with his sense of humor, not his political philosophy or the plain ideological idiocy of those around him. The true teaching, then, is that his revolution of the mind came about because anyone with wit can't be a radical, at least not for more than a few paychecks. Radicalism is incompatible with getting good yuks out of life. Lenin was not a comic; revolution is no comedy. These are Mr. Epstein's genuine lessons, his *true* reasons. . . .

WILLIAM JOHNSTON, JR.
Wallingford, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . My own experience is differ-

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ent from Joseph Epstein's. Ever since I entered the university scene, I have tried to defend capitalism to American professors, mostly philosophers. In most cases the reason they hang on to their anti-capitalist ideas is that they believe that something *might be* better and one must in any event fight for that. In short, a kind of simple utopianism, based on the otherworldly ethics of both Christianity and Marxism, leads many of them to refuse to give their support to a system which, in the last analysis, is best "merely" for human life here on earth, at least for the time being.

TIBOR R. MACHAN
Franklin College
Lugano, Switzerland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Inasmuch as the Letters from Readers section is COMMENTARY's crowning glory—outraged readers' . . . denunciations capped by cool authors' devastating point-by-point ripostes—how sad that the young Joseph Epstein, torpedoed so neatly by his older self in "The Education of an Anti-Capitalist," isn't around to defend himself. Perhaps Mr. Epstein can choose from among his students some particularly serious, intelligent, talented, and articulate young anti-capitalist fool to act as young Epstein's intellectual successor and literary executor. At any good university there should be plenty of candidates.

ROBERTO ALAZAR
Studio City, California

JOSEPH EPSTEIN writes:

"Never apologize, never explain" is normally a sensible rule to apply to reactions to one's own writing, but in the case of Robert Nozick's reaction to my essay I wish to break the rule. I should like first to apologize and then to explain.

I am sorry for any embarrassment I may have caused Mr. Nozick by summarizing his unpublished article in my essay. This, I hope he will believe, was not my intention.

Which leads into my explanation. Things occurred as Mr. Nozick describes in his letter. I invited him to write for the *American Scholar*; he sent me his essay; I criticized the essay, and we discussed my criticisms, over the telephone, in a most amiable fashion. As I recall, Mr. Nozick remarked that some of my criticisms seemed sensible to him; that he would think further about them; and that he would get back to me before too long. When after a few months he did not get back to me, I thought that he had abandoned his article, and so I felt that I was well within my bounds in summarizing the argument of the article, without mentioning the name of the author, in my own essay. So confident was I that I had done no wrong that I even directed COMMENTARY to send a copy of my essay to Mr. Nozick "at the suggestion of Joseph Epstein." I was mistaken, and I apologize.

It is a pleasure not to have to apologize to Dennis H. Wrong. I thought only certain literary critics at Yale went in for misreading texts, but Mr. Wrong could teach them a thing or two. I did not say that people hold anti-capitalist views out of cowardliness or resentment; I did say that the intellectual tradition in this country is overwhelmingly anti-capitalist, which is quite a different thing. Nor do I wish to deny now that, yes, millions of people in America live wretchedly. But I think it has become fairly clear that ideas of the kind that Mr. Wrong and the editors of *Dissent* and anti-capitalists generally put forth to improve the condition of the poor have already shown themselves to do nothing of the kind. Nor did I ever say that Edmund Wilson, George Orwell, John Maynard Keynes, *et al.* were, or are, doctrinaire Marxists. I said that they all operated under a strong anti-capitalist bias. I think Mr. Wrong would have done better to have attempted to show that they didn't. Or to show that the kind of anti-capitalism I discussed in my essay does not lead to anti-Americanism. Or to deal straight on with any of the points raised in my essay. But why argue seriously when it is so much simpler to call one's adversary intellectually gross?

It is difficult not to be charmed by the good will implicit in a letter such as that of R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., which refers to my essay as a "long-winded explication." Allow me, briefly, to respond to his short-

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winded letter. I fear I must invite Mr. Tyrrell to go back into the files to read the issues of the early years of William F. Buckley's *National Review*. There he will find defenses of Senator Joseph McCarthy, of states' rights against civil rights, and in particular of Generalissimo Franco by a writer named L. Brent Bozell that I think may shiver even Mr. Tyrrell's conservative timbers. Then there was the sophomoric humor of the magazine—some of which has been picked up by Mr. Tyrrell's own publication, the *American Spectator*. One of the great banes of the Left has been its humorlessness; yet one of the great banes of the Right is, precisely, its humor. But I grow long-winded.

Finally, I was brought up by the last line of David H. Katz's letter, in which Mr. Katz puts forth the thesis that he, along with other radicals, will continue to be against capitalism "precisely because I am 'for' America." I felt as if I had flicked the radio dial to a rendition of "Moon Over Miami" or "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." In other words, I used to sing Mr. Katz's song myself. What I hated about capitalism, what I disliked about America as it was currently constituted, was that it wasn't as good as it might be, it wasn't as good as it ought to be—it wasn't as good, as fine, as noble, not to put too fine a point on it, as I.

UNESCO

To the Editor of Commentary:

It is seldom that Americans and their media give time and thought to reporting and informed criticism on international organizations and our participation in them. This seems especially so in the case of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Thus, Chester E. Finn, Jr. deserves thanks for his article, "How to Lose the War of Ideas" [August].

I agree with Mr. Finn's principal conclusion and recommendations but offer supplementary observations and suggestions which seem to me important if his general objectives are to be achieved: winning the war of ideas. (I was Deputy Director General of UNESCO from 1970 to 1978, having previously served with the Marshall Plan, NATO, the Department of State, and as Deputy Director of the U.S. AID Mission to India. I am currently Vice Chairman of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO.)

Mr. Finn's experience as an adviser on a U.S. delegation to one UNESCO conference shocked him into an anecdotal report and recording of a series of impressions. . . . He was dismayed by the American performance as he saw it in this case and by an apparent lack of success for this country in UNESCO. I consider that this judgment is too negative. But he does arrive at a conclusion which warrants restating: the U.S. and its Western democratic allies—unlike the Soviet Union—have no long-term policy and strategy for UNESCO or for their participation in it. . . .

Mr. Finn is correct. He has stated what some of those who have been involved in UNESCO, inside and out, have been saying for a long time, especially during the last fifteen years. . . . Why have others been so slow to make known this judgment and to urge a change in our posture? Some of the present-day critics of UNESCO and other international organizations—especially the American press—are like monks emerging from their cells and blinking in amazement at what has been happening to the world outside.

Mr. Finn notes with regret the lack of attention to UNESCO at high levels. . . . Again he is right. Early in the 1970's a politically active American attended several UNESCO meetings and was struck both by the problems and the possibilities for the U.S. She tried several times without success to talk to Henry Kissinger about her impressions and recommendations. Finally, she was able to contact him by telephone. Before she could explain her views, he told her that he knew that she wanted to talk about UNESCO. The subject was simply not important enough for him even to listen. . . .

America could be said to be getting what it deserves as the result of its own neglect. It does not seem to want to make the efforts necessary to play the role in UNESCO which befits the power and nature of this country and thus to gain the benefits which are available from membership in international organizations. . . .

So far, thanks and plaudits to Mr. Finn for his analysis. But wait! He is too quick to pass somewhat extreme judgments about the state of affairs and to prescribe tactics which may not serve our interests. . . .

Good material for a better informed and balanced judgment can come from reading the report of a special meeting called by the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO (held at the University of South Carolina in June 1982): *A Critical Assessment of United States Participation in UNESCO*.

One suspects that Mr. Finn is led to his more hasty and partial opinions by what is too common among Americans—a cynicism about and an inadequate grasp of developments in the world in the last thirty-five years, especially since 1960 with the entry on the scene of many newly independent countries; a lack of sensitivity toward others which borders on contempt; a lack of appreciation of their cultures and the difficulties facing them in achieving goals to which most of them aspire and of which we approve; a defensive attitude which Mr. Finn and Senator Moynihan condemn as too common to America-in-the-world but which they may sometimes unconsciously adopt; and the use of extreme terms to describe the positions of others, our reactions to them and to the state of international cooperation.

Introducing such terms as abhorrent, obnoxious, degradation, instruments of destruction, offensive, and the like can lead us to promote the same "politicization" of UNESCO which we criticize in others and can blind us to the constructive steps we can take with others, including Western allies, to advance our values through UNESCO. There is much more than what Mr. Finn describes as a "handful of worthwhile activities in isolated crannies of the vast UNESCO Secretariat" and they are *not* "greatly outnumbered by programs that embody the interests of those who despise or fear the principles enshrined in UNESCO's constitution and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

Moreover, Mr. Finn shows a bias in criticizing some of those individuals and groups who have fought battles on behalf of American interests and principles and who did so while those he might deem more acceptable were ignoring the battlefields.

By adopting some of the tactics he appears to favor, we may not only betray such fundamental values as due process, cooperation, fairness, respect for and honesty in the use of language, and adherence to contractual obligations, but may

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encourage others to engage in even more of the behavior we dislike.

The tactic of withholding a part of our contribution or placing conditions and restrictions on it, for example, was first adopted by the Soviet Union and then by the French. It is a tactic of politicization which can erode any possibility of having a viable institution for cooperation. I believe that there are other ways of taking advantage of the "power of the dollar" which will not so dishonor American principles and good faith. These other ways admittedly will require patient working-out and will involve changes in the financial or other regulations of the international agencies and in their methods of budgeting and assessing contributions. This subject warrants more detailed discussion and exposition.

The situation is not good, but it is not so bad as Mr. Finn has concluded from his one encounter. He is right, of course, in reminding us that there are battles to be fought and that we ought to be better prepared and disciplined warriors with a strategic plan, a set of policies, and appropriate tactics. . . .

I conclude with renewed thanks to Mr. Finn for his provocative essay. America needed to be told how to take UNESCO seriously. I regret having doubts about securing "the time and attention of those who make foreign policy for the United States, in both the executive branch and the Congress. . . ." Certainly, that will depend much on the fulfillment of Mr. Finn's concluding recommendation:

> Taking UNESCO seriously demands the sustained attention of nongovernmental leaders—from business, labor, science, the academy, the media, and the major cultural institutions—in the *effective* [emphasis added] advocacy of liberal democracy in international arenas. . . . So long as UNESCO is ignored, dismissed, idealized, or simply condemned by the heirs and descendants of those who created it, the principles on which it was founded will continue to be eroded, and the United States, which rests on the self-same principles, will continue to be weakened.

That is why it was so encouraging that the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently assured continued funding for the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. That is why the support of the private sector for that commission, whose future is now under study, is so important.

JOHN E. FOBES
Webster, North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I greatly admired Chester E. Finn's extremely lucid, accurate, and comprehensive analysis of UNESCO as an international body and his description of what actually takes place at UNESCO meetings.

From personal experience as a participant for over ten years in numerous UNESCO conferences, seminars, and other meetings, I can only endorse every word Mr. Finn says. I think that all foreign ministries in the West and—above all!—every career diplomat at UNESCO should read Mr. Finn's article very carefully. They can then draw the necessary conclusions and act accordingly.

HANS W. SEELHOFER
Federation of Swiss Journalists
Berne, Switzerland

CHESTER E. FINN, JR. writes:

John E. Fobes's long immersion in the affairs of UNESCO has given him more detailed knowledge of its activities than any participant in a single conference could possibly glean, and I am prepared to accept his suggestion that there may be as many as two handfuls of worthwhile activities under way there. But the number is shrinking, even as UNESCO grows—in membership and budget alike.

Obviously we agree that the United States should try to take UNESCO more seriously than it has in the past, though clearly Mr. Fobes would not endorse my fall-back strategy, which is to get out entirely, thereby denying UNESCO both the moral legitimacy that American participation confers and the enormous amount of money that we contribute to it.

Mr. Fobes seems to believe that American tactics in UNESCO councils should resemble the manners one adopts at a formal tea party. That would be fine with me if the other attendees also behaved de-

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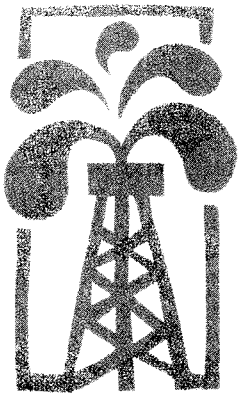

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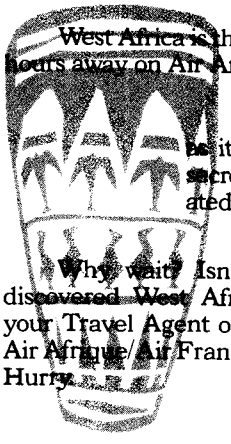

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The Illuminated Vortex

Understanding how the in-cylinder flow of the fuel-air mixture is influenced by chamber geometry provides a key to improving engine performance. By applying a laser measurement technique, a researcher at the General Motors Research Laboratories has gained new insight into the behavior of the flow.

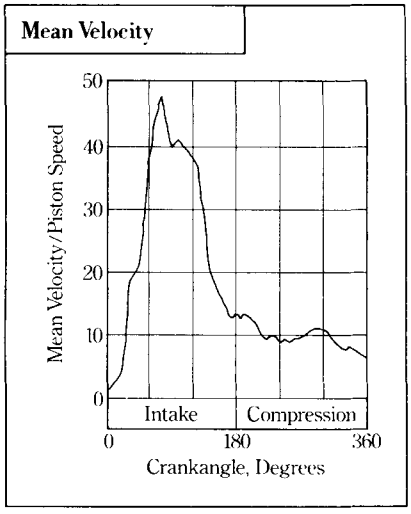


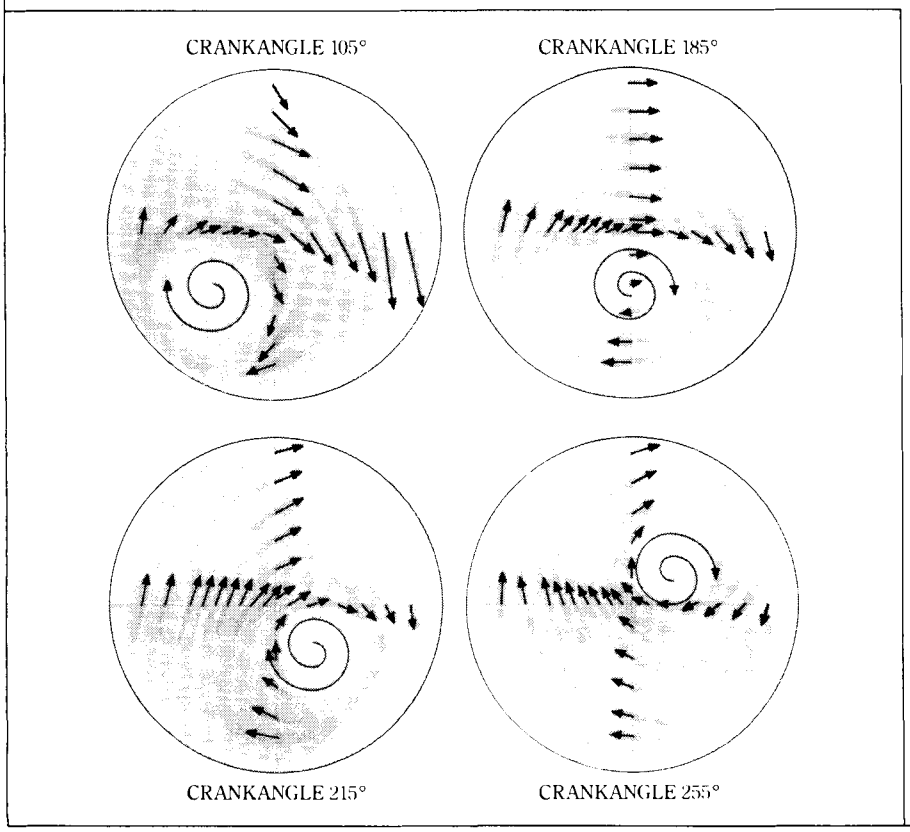
Figure 1: History of mean velocity at a single engine location.

Figure 2: Panoramic view of engine flow patterns. With changing crankangle, the center of rotation precesses from the cylinder's lower left quadrant to its upper right quadrant.

THE FLUID motions inside engine cylinders have considerable influence over the progress of combustion. Mixing of air and fuel, combustion rate, and heat losses from the cylinder are all important transport processes strongly dependent on fluid motions. The motion inside the cylinder has two components. Mean velocity influences the transport of momentum, energy, and species on a cylinder-wide scale, while the turbulence component influences the same phenomena on a local basis. The in-cylinder flow field depends primarily on the geometry of the cylinder and inlet port. Hence, decisions made in the engine design stage exert a controlling influence over the flow. But before questions about how different geometrical features affect the flow field can be answered, the problem of how to measure the flow must be solved. By applying Laser Doppler Anemometry (LDA), Dr. Rodney Rask, a researcher at the General Motors Research Laboratories, has obtained detailed measurements of the flow field.

LDA is a technique in which two focused laser beams pass into the cylinder through a quartz window. In the minute measuring region where the laser beams cross, a regular pattern of interference fringes is created. As the 1-micron particles, which have been added to the engine inlet flow, cross the measurement region, they scatter light in the bright fringes. In Dr. Rask's LDA system, the scattered light is collected by the same lenses used to focus the laser beam, and measured by a photomultiplier tube. The resulting signal is processed electronically to determine the time it takes a particle to traverse a fixed number of fringes. Since the fringe spacing is a known function of the laser beam crossing angle, this transit time provides a direct measure of velocity.

During operation of the LDA, measurements of velocity as a function of engine rotation (crankangle) are made at a number of locations within the cylinder. The instantaneous velocity at each point must then be separated into mean and turbulence components. The simplest technique is to declare that the mean velocities for all cycles are identical and ensemble average the data. However, this approach ignores the cyclic variation in the mean velocity. Another technique looks at individual cycles and uses a variety of methods, including sophisticated filtering, to split the instantaneous velocity into its components. This



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approach is consistent with the LDA measurements, which clearly show that the mean velocity does not repeat exactly from one engine cycle to the next.

Differences in the flow field from one cycle to the next can seriously compromise engine efficiency. Near the end of the compression stroke, it is important to maintain a consistent velocity at key cylinder locations (e.g., at a spark plug). Dr. Rask's LDA measurements have identified design features that control cyclic variability.

FIGURE 1 shows mean velocity measured at a single location during an engine cycle. High velocity exists during the intake stroke when the inlet flow is rushing through the narrow valve opening. This jet-like flow into the cylinder causes large velocity differences between adjacent cylinder locations and produces strong turbulence. As the end of the intake stroke is approached (180 degrees in Figure 1), the levels of both mean velocity and turbulence drop rapidly. This decrease is a result of the changing boundary conditions for the cylinder—from strong inflow to no inflow. During the compression stroke the flow field evolves, but it undergoes no drastic changes. However, in a high-squish chamber, where the flow is forced into a small bowl in the piston or cylinder head, considerable turbulence is generated near the end of the compression stroke.

Measurements from many cylinder locations are necessary to make the flow field understandable. Figure 2 shows four flow patterns covering a period from near the end of intake into the compression stroke. Note the strong vortical flow, with the center of the vortex away from the cylinder center and precessing with changing crankangle.

By experimenting with geometrical variables, Dr. Rask has gained new understanding of phenomena observed in operating engines. The resulting knowledge has guided the design and development of new engines with a minimum of trial-and-error testing. The LDA findings are also being used to validate and calibrate engine flow computer models under development.

"From our measurements," Dr. Rask states, "we have been able to deduce how changes in the geometry of the port and combustion chamber modify the velocity field. These flow field effects are now being used to help designers tailor engine combustion for optimum performance."

General Motors

GM

MARK OF EXCELLENCE

THE MAN BEHIND THE WORK

Dr. Rodney Rask is a Senior Staff Research Engineer in the Fluid Mechanics Department at the General Motors Research Laboratories.

Dr. Rask received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in mechanical engineering from the University of Minnesota. His Ph.D. thesis concerned the Coanda effect.

Prior to joining General Motors in 1973, Dr. Rask worked on the design of nuclear reactors at the Knoll's Atomic Power Laboratories. In addition to further refinements in LDA measurement techniques, his current research interests include computer simulation of engine systems, with special emphasis on the intake manifold.

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cently, but in fact many of them are systematically and cynically engaging in behavior more apt to be found at a gathering of Mafia chieftains (or in the Politburo itself). The Soviet Union and its allies, proxies, and dependencies routinely indulge in the political and rhetorical equivalent of shooting down unarmed civilian airliners. Are we, as Mr. Fobes seems to suggest, to continue flying blithely through the night as if the air lanes were safe for all whose hearts are pure and motives noble?

As for the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, so far as I have been able to tell it is essentially a cheerleading team comprised primarily of people who think UNESCO is just swell. Its solitary contribution to the work of our delegation in Paris last April was to advise us before leaving Washington that our Ambassador is a lovely and hard-working woman (true) and that we were sure to have a marvelous time (false).

To Hans W. Seelhofer, my personal thanks coupled with a reluctant prediction that, while a few of the "career diplomats at UNESCO" might take the first part of his advice, it is not at all likely that any of them will follow the second.

The Schools

To the Editor of Commentary:

Joseph Adelson's interesting article, "How the Schools Were Ruined" [July], should be a starting point for the coming dialogue over the direction of education in the United States. . . . May I add a few observations on his main points?

First, Mr. Adelson identifies the loss of authority as a major problem in the nation's schools—particularly the public schools. I agree, but find more than litigiousness to blame. We must also recognize that we have placed increasingly greater responsibilities on our schools—duties once reserved for family—for the inculcation of morals and ethics. We have abdicated our parental responsibilities to the schools and made them the guarantors of our children's well-being.

At the same time, . . . we have taken away parental privileges or immunities once afforded the schools. Here litigiousness has eaten away at the concept of *in loco parentis*—the privilege of acting in place of parents—and placed increased emphasis on children's rights. When Mr. Adelson sees teachers afraid of disciplining children for fear of facing a lawsuit, he is describing, in part, the effects of the demise of *in loco parentis*. . . .

Mr. Adelson finds that technological and liberationist reform has failed utterly to create a utopian society. Modern educational reform might have been great in theory, or even in practice in the hands of the right pedagogue, but for most of us it was deadly in the classroom. Technological innovations such as TV courses and the liberationist survey courses and seminars were in the end just gimmicks, distractions from the real task of learning the material. Technology is fine, but it is a poor substitute for good scholarship.

Third, Mr. Adelson addresses the pendulum swing between equality and excellence. It is a shame that we have to view those qualities as incompatible. Has no one considered that we might find a way to be both excellent and equal? . . .

Finally, I think Mr. Adelson obliquely refers to, but fails to address adequately, the enormous influence on education of our loss of faith and consequent grasping at materialism. . . . Once we accept the marketplace as the denominator of value, it is inevitable that, as Mr. Adelson points out, our teachers feel less professional or successful. . . . I believe that liberal education is failing because it cannot be converted into instant cash in the market; unless we do something about our materialistic myopia, liberal education may be made economically obsolete.

Jay S. Bybee

Washington, D. C.

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . While I do not pretend to approach the scholarly stature of Joseph Adelson, I can lay special claim to inside knowledge of public education in the last few decades. I had the luck—or the lack of it—to be born in 1961 and consequently have spent the greater portion of my life in public schools. Raised in an affluent, suburban district, living in a progressive, strongly education-oriented state, I, along with thou-

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sands of others in my generation, became the . . . experimental subjects of the "technological" and "liberationist" educational reforms of the 1960's and early 70's.

Indeed, some of my most vivid memories of public school consist of the confusion of fourth-grade "math contracts," intense sixth-grade crash courses in U.S. "minority history," and high-school "modular scheduling," which allowed as much as one-third of the school day to be utterly wasted at the individual student's counseled discretion.

But what I began to suspect upon graduation from high school, I have now had bitterly confirmed after three years of college. I was undereducated in both substance and technique. Not only did I not learn all that I should have learned, . . . I did not learn how to learn in the first place. . . . My entire scholastic experience thus far leads me to conclude, along with Mr. Adelson, that successful education needs more than money or the latest progressive ideas. What is finally receiving public attention is that our educational system is failing, and the reason is that the necessary framework of values and beliefs is manifestly lacking. Mr. Adelson does a good job of showing why.

NICHOLAS P. GRANATH
Gustavus Adolphus College
Minnetonka, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . One factor in the decline of the schools not touched upon by Joseph Adelson—except very generally—is the mountain of paperwork piled on school administrations. This has grown to such gargantuan proportions that it has flowed over into the laps of non-administrative staff and affected the amount of time available for supervision, guidance, and instruction. All of this has come about as a result of government directives which require schools to undertake tasks which have little, if anything, to do with instruction and of the desire of the bureaucracies created by these regulations to freeze into concrete their burgeoning empires by creating more and more forms. . . .

As a New York City public-high-school guidance counselor, I can attest to this. Detailed forms must be obtained from parents and checked concerning students' eligibility for a variety of lunch and breakfast programs. In New York City, we must—in great detail—check for a whole series of immunizations for each student. We are required to evaluate students for possible learning disabilities and complete several forms for each student entering from outside the system. Students with Hispanic last names must be given special language tests to determine eligibility for bilingual programs. And—of course—long and detailed reports must be completed periodically for all of the above. This is by no means a complete list of all the extra-instructional activities imposed upon the schools. . . .

School administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, and students themselves must take progressively more time away from educational tasks to meet these requirements, which are—at best—only indirectly related to instruction. . . .

This, too, is why education in American public schools is neither

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what it ought to be nor what it once was.

FREDERIC WILE

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I began to read Joseph Adelson's article with considerable expectation. Here at last, I thought, was somebody willing to tackle the "how" of the decline of our schools. . . . But the article turned out to be a typical, intellectualized piece . . . high above any concrete, specific account of what high school was like from Sputnik (1958) until the National Commission on Excellence in Education's *A Nation at Risk* (1983).

Consider these factors, for instance: the chaos of integration; ever larger, arbitrarily consolidated schools; the bewildering influx of knowledge to translate into a curriculum; the flood of cure-all textbooks; metropolitan decay surrounding inner-city schools, with a fear of crime on the very streets where schools are located; a mixture of race and social class in the classroom found nowhere else in the world; legal mandates to accept in the classroom every conceivable handicapped youth; Supreme Court decisions to teach aliens in their native tongue; a drug problem beyond the scope of any previously known in Western civilization. . . . Never in the history of education have such simultaneous demands been made upon schooling. . . .

There was even more. Certain ideas coming from the various academic disciplines put pressure on the high schools during this same period. . . . Inept teachers and half-baked administrators did not think them up; they relied on their betters —the liberal-arts disciplines. Look what the shock of Sputnik brought to pass, chiefly in response to John W. Gardner's "new excellence": "back to basics"; intellectual competencies (long lists of them); performance-based instruction; "mastery" of cognitive skills; reading as concept development; . . . objective testing of fundamentals (a billion-dollars worth); the rise of advanced-placement courses; the advent of calculus in high school; a "renaissance" in teaching "writing as thinking."

And that isn't all: the stringent demands of the "new math," so difficult that few teachers could handle it; the new grammars, much more abstract and codified than the old; the new sociology, its game theory *à la* Wittgenstein having junior-high-school students simulating summit meetings; and the New Criticism that had students separating the poem from self, history, and author. . . .

All of this accentuated sheer, stark intellect, just what Gardner had originally ordered. The academic disciplines never had it so good in respect to the schools. . . .

Thus after twenty-five years of schooling the intellect, we (who?) find the schools riding "a tide of mediocrity." How could this be, when the schools were doing what the academic disciplines had recommended? What does Mr. Adelson think should have been happening? Or what should be happening now? Mr. Adelson waits till the very last half-page to tell us.

Here, a dialectic that has been running underneath his whole article now comes to the surface. On the one hand, he sets up a general public, sometimes called "parents," at other times "the common people" (somewhat like Rousseau's "natural man"), who have an innate awareness that "something" is wrong with their schools. These good people "deserve" better. On the other hand, there are the administrators, the educators, the powerful leaders . . ., the educational bureaucrats (15,000 of them), who have the public-school system tied up. This tension can be resolved, according to Mr. Adelson; we have "only to find a way to cope with the intellectual inertia of our educational leadership." So it turns out to be that simple after all—if one can decipher what "cope," "intellectual inertia," and "leadership" mean. . . .

Mr. Adelson never mentions that there are thousands of sovereign school boards across this land made up of these deserving, innately good people who could have revolted against or restrained or aroused these "inert" leaders.

With a bit of empathy sprinkled over his intellect, Mr. Adelson might have confessed his own role in the "ruination," as I do now, looking back.

In my Nestorian stage, I become weary of a declining democracy berating its schools for its own shortcomings. Perhaps, instead, education should be taking the measure of democracy.

GEORGE H. HENRY

University of Delaware

Newark, Delaware

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JOSEPH ADELSON writes:

I appreciate the letters from Jay S. Bybee, Nicholas P. Granath, and Frederic Wile, and agree with them fully. I suspect George H. Henry is using the occasion to express a more general sense of irritation. My article did not berate the schools; to the contrary. Nor did I have a role in their ruination, hence feel no need to confess, as Mr. Henry does. As to why the disaffection of the public is not translated into policy—that happens all the time, and not only in education. Why are racial quota systems maintained and expanded in the face of overwhelming public disapproval? Why do we subsidize the United Nations despite public disenchantment? Because the values and interests of elites and bureaucracies quite often differ from those of the general public. That has certainly been the case in education, where a widespread, rising public unhappiness has been evident in opinion polling for almost two decades, with little effect upon policy or practice until recently. I think it makes more sense to recognize and try to cope with these slippages and tensions than to lament a "declining democracy." If that is the problem, why bother? Simply sigh wearily, write something suitably epideictic, and pack it in.

Nuclear Strategists

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am not surprised by Edward N. Luttwak's mainly unfavorable review of my book, *The Wizards of Armageddon* [Books in Review, August]. In early January 1981, while researching a magazine article, I telephoned Mr. Luttwak, who, upon hearing my name, muttered, "Yes, Mr. Kaplan, I know who you are, you are a very bad man."

Be that as it may, I must confess that, in a perverse sort of way, I was delighted with Mr. Luttwak's review; for it demonstrates that he could find serious shortcomings in my book only by seriously distorting its contents.

Mr. Luttwak's chief objection—he repeats it many, many times—is that I totally misrepresent the nature of the Soviet threat; that the real threat is that posed by the Soviet *army*; and that the American "defense intellectuals" whom I portray were trying to formulate a nuclear strategy to deter not so much a direct nuclear first-strike against the U.S. but rather a conventionally armed invasion of Western Europe. According to Mr. Luttwak's review, my book says "nothing whatever . . . about the Soviet army," fails by "leaving the Soviet army out of the picture," "gives no serious consideration to the strategic predicament which was the source of it all: to protect Western Europe from intimidation if not attack." Most astonishingly, according to Mr. Luttwak, I do "not feel it necessary to describe, even in a single phrase, what it was that the American deterrent was to deter."

This is simply nonsense. In my descriptions of how the defense intellectuals devised strategies involving "limited nuclear options" and "counterforce targeting"—in discussing how and why Bernard Brodie came up with his "no-cities" doctrine, in describing the political and social context within which the analysts of the RAND Corporation lived and thought, in revealing how William Kaufmann, perhaps the most articulate and (behind-the-scenes) influential counterforce theorist, translated his ideas on "limited [conventional] war" to a conception of limited nuclear war, in analyzing the motives behind former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger's "selective-options" policy—I constantly and consistently emphasize that their main concern was fear of the Soviet *army*, perceived as more powerful than the armies of the West, especially in certain regions. I describe, rather painstakingly in fact, how Kaufmann especially came to the field of nuclear strategy in search of a solution to precisely the problem about which Mr. Luttwak claims I say "nothing whatever"—deterrence of Soviet conventional aggression against Western Europe in an age when both the U.S. and the USSR have plenty of nuclear bombs.

For proof on this matter, I refer the interested reader (and Mr. Luttwak) to pp. 33-34, 80-81, 92, 202-04, 218-19, 223-24, 238, 242, 348-49, 358-59, 368-71, and 376 of my book. The point is made throughout the book, but these sections state it most clearly.

(I should add here that many of

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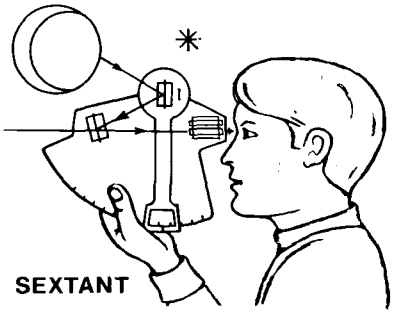

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the nuclear "wizards" portrayed in my book *did* conceive the Soviet threat as one of a surprise, bolt-from-the-blue first-strike against SAC bombers and missile sites inside the continental U.S. To the extent that Mr. Luttwak believes, as I do, that this scenario is—in his words—"most improbable," he should aim his salvos at various characters in my book, not at me.)

If space allowed, I could offer similar rebuttal to virtually every objection filed by Mr. Luttwak. That he is so wrong on his most belabored point should be a sufficient observation for now.

Finally, I must say a few words about Mr. Luttwak's lengthy interpretation of the Soviets' first hydrogen bomb. It is true that it contained lithium, suggesting it was potentially an operational weapon, not just a "device" (a point that I make in the book). However, Mr. Luttwak fails to note that the Soviet bomb was about 3 percent as powerful as the H-bomb that the U.S. exploded a year earlier, and—as Herbert York points out in his authoritative history, *The Advisers*—it was not based on the Teller-Ulam design principles that lead to the construction of bombs of indefinitely large size. The Soviets would not build one of those until November 1955, three years after the Americans. In short, J. Robert Oppenheimer's pleas for restraint were not so suicidal; had they been followed, even for a year or so, the U.S. would still have retained a substantial lead.

FRED KAPLAN

Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Edward N. Luttwak makes the assertion, which critics of American defense policy and its role in generating the arms race would do well to consider, that strategic thinking has not been primarily preoccupied with the threat to the American continent posed by the Soviet arms arsenal. The stability and effectiveness of deterrence in that arena, he suggests, has not been a matter of serious doubt. Rather, efforts have centered upon the requirements of extending deterrence to protect the European allies otherwise left vulnerable to the danger both of conventional attack and nuclear intimidation by the Soviets. Acknowledging the apparently ludicrous "overkill" capacity, he states that to defend the United States itself "a great part of the nuclear weapons would always have been unnecessary." This is a point of formidable importance clarifying as it does the centrality of the Atlantic alliance in the calculus of the arms race. . . .

Here a second point of Mr. Luttwak's is cogent even if proffered almost parenthetically. Mr. Luttwak points out . . . "the enormous increases in defense spending that a truly adequate conventional deterrent would require." But in the face of the swelling opposition to escalating nuclear-arms spending and the upcoming European deployments, the stern misgivings over American refusal to renounce "first-use" options, and the frontal challenge to the moral integrity of nuclear policy generally, this "alternative to the decline of Western security" demands our steady focus. . . .

The greatest share of the burden in adopting such a course undoubtedly and rightfully falls upon the Europeans themselves. . . . In what way and to what degree do they regard themselves as intimidated by the Soviets and in what manner and to what extent are they . . . prepared to sacrifice to defend their own freedom? While American support for the defense of Europe might continue unwavering and at the ready, and is likely to remain indispensable, American views on these European-first questions, and American resources committed to assistance, must clearly and wisely be deemed subordinate.

From the cursory manner in which this critical alternative is broached, I sense that Mr. Luttwak and many other strategic planners and policy advisers are ill-disposed to . . . consider it for ulterior reasons. (Witness the storm over the recent advocacy of a "no-first-use" policy despite its corollary call for strengthened conventional forces in Europe.) At first glance, their objection appears to be political, a concern over the plausibility of securing the increased defense spending in Western capitals that might be required for conventional deterrence. . . . More penetrating perhaps is the anxiety prompted by the prospect that the European nations may elect . . . to decouple their security and thus their interests from those of the United States. However, are these not precisely the issues that deserve to be addressed on their merits, deliberately and forthrightly, by an informed and enfranchised public? . . .

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Earnest efforts toward arms-control notwithstanding, the reality of Soviet military power may be forcing the West to face starkly the legitimate choice, too long obfuscated and deferred: of continued extension of the American nuclear deterrent, with the implicit dismissal or at least neglect of the widely-held aspiration for a policy aimed at progressive denuclearization; of respect for this policy at the cost of the added burdens of conventional-force deterrence; *or*, . . . of abdication before . . . the potential intimidation or aggression . . . posed by Soviet forces left undeterred. . . .

Priority must pass from the United States to the European nations, on the front line in regard to their own defense, and from the leadership of national-strategic planners to the resolution and commitment of their respective publics. Without such refocusing, I suspect that the unqualified exoneration of the nuclear strategists which Edward N. Luttwak's review so forcefully argues may well have to be deferred.

JEFFREY PICK
Windham Center, Connecticut

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK writes:

My remark about "a single phrase" was obviously hyperbolic, but such phrases as Fred Kaplan does use show that he neither appreciates the Soviet threat himself nor understands the role it played, and continues to play, in the strategic thought he undertakes to criticize.

Jeffrey Pick's alternatives are indeed the major ones that we must continue to evaluate. I suppose there is some truth in his claim that these choices have been obfuscated in the *American* debates over nuclear weapons. But I want to assure Mr. Pick that his alternatives are central whenever Americans and Europeans gather. It is clear that the alliance must indeed move toward a choice. My own preference would be for a very substantial reinforcement of conventional capabilities, and my major quarrel with the born-again conventional rearmers is that they grossly underestimate the effort needed to contain the Soviet Union. Much loose talk about 3 percent or 4 percent increases, cavalier statements about the supposedly miraculous effect of some new weapons upon the balance, should not obscure the fact that what is needed in Central Europe is not less than an entire new army.

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"IT IS IRONIC, and also tiresomely predictable, that the same newspapers and commentators that called on Reagan to cancel his scheduled November visit to the Philippines would be the first heartily to applaud a presidential visit to Moscow, Budapest, Managua, Warsaw, Sofia, Bucharest, or Peking. It is not dictatorships that this crowd objects to; it is dictatorships that dictate so feebly that they cannot control the oppressed masses."

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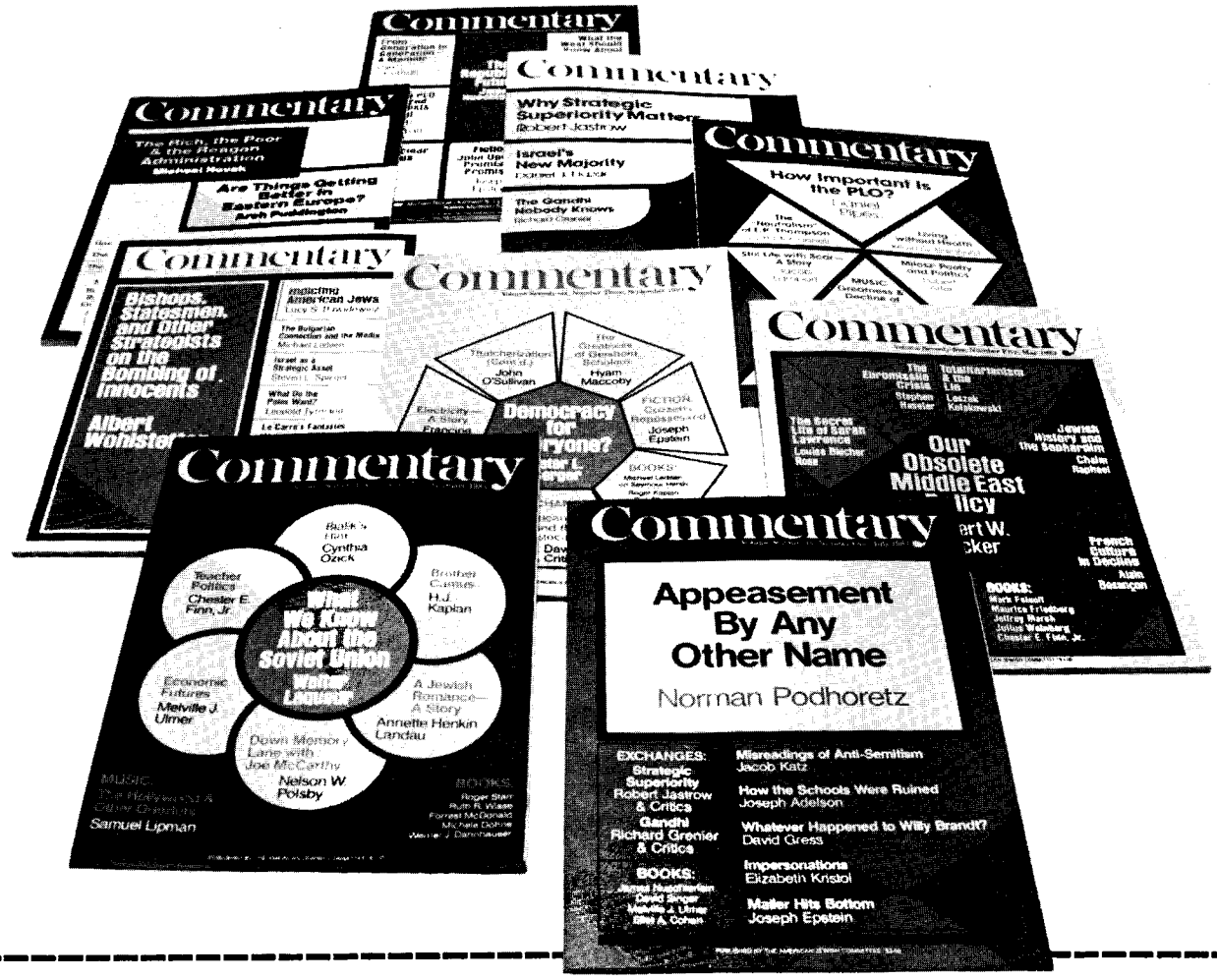

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The New Soviet Apologists

Arch Puddington

AMONG the many consequences of the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 has been the temporary suspension of a growing disposition on the American Left to propagate a more sympathetic attitude toward the Soviet system and the Soviet Union's global role. I stress the word temporary, since recent history suggests that those who are predisposed—for whatever reason—to an optimistic analysis of Soviet behavior are fully capable of ignoring, forgetting about, or explaining away acts of Soviet barbarism entailing far greater loss of life and with much more serious geostrategic implications than the airline catastrophe. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, for example, has by conservative estimates resulted in the slaughter of over 130,000 people, including many noncombatants, the destruction of whole villages, refugees numbering in the millions, and innumerable instances of calculated murder, such as the cold-blooded execution of all males in a particular village. Despite the obstacles which inhibit press coverage of these events, reports of Soviet atrocities have nonetheless appeared in the most influential Western newspapers and journals. They have thus come to the attention of the very people who have been engaged in a campaign to convince the American people that the Soviet Union, far from being an implacable, totalitarian "evil empire" (in Ronald Reagan's words), represents a lesser danger to world peace than the United States.

Yet to such people a resurgent anti-Communism represents a threat to everything the Left holds sacred. Thus in an article entitled "The Return of Cold War Liberalism," prominently featured in the *Nation,* Andrew Kopkind issues a sweeping indictment of liberal institutions, publications, political figures, and writers who have contributed to what he calls a new cold-war culture. Among Kopkind's targets are Irving Howe (for expressing reservations about the New Left in his autobiography); William O'Neill (for his critical examination of fellow-travelers in *A Better World*); the *New York Review of Books* (for publishing an essay by a defector from Vietnam's National Liberation Front); Susan Sontag (for her Town Hall "Communism-is-fascism" speech); two radical journalists (for a *Rolling Stone* piece condemning the irresponsibility of the New Left); and just about anyone on the Left who has changed his mind about the social, racial, or global assumptions which guided the radical "movement" during the 1960's, or who has taken the position that Soviet Communism represents the betrayal of liberal or socialist principles.

Contrary to what he himself asserts, however, Kopkind's attack on this position is now widely echoed both implicitly and explicitly on the American Left. Indeed, not since the dying gasps of the presidential campaign of Henry Wallace in 1948 have so many on the Left been so intently working to recast the Soviet image in a more positive light.

THERE are, of course, important differences between the current period and the immediate postwar era. The Communist party, although it works assiduously to influence the peace movement and other liberal and left-wing movements, today counts for much less in national politics than it did in the 40's. And with rare exceptions, one never encounters the kind of overt pro-Sovietism which during the 40's was frequently expressed by writers in the *Nation,* the *New Republic,* and other liberal periodicals.

But similarities between the two periods are evident as well. Then, as now, it had become clear to most people that the Soviet Union, far from having given birth to a new and uniquely humane social order, was in fact a brutal police state led by a cynical dictator who had revealed his contempt for high principle by reaching an alliance with Nazi Germany. Nor was it a secret that Stalin was moving rapidly and with utmost force to consolidate the Kremlin's hegemony over Eastern Europe. Yet confronted with the undeniable facts regarding Eastern Europe, many leftists in the early postwar years simply replied that the subjugation of these countries must unfortunately be overlooked, since the necessity of maintaining "peace" overrode all other concerns. Some were even willing to go

ARCH PUDDINGTON is executive director of the League for Industrial Democracy and the editor of *Workers Under Communism.* His article, "Are Things Getting Better in Eastern Europe?," appeared in our August issue.

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further and argue that Stalin's policies regarding the satellites were altogether to the good. As late as 1950, two years after a Communist coup extinguished the hopes for democracy in Czechoslovakia, I.F. Stone could write:

> Western Europe wasn't safe for democracy until feudalism had been cleared away and the masses raised from illiterate serfdom. Russia in its own rough but effective way is doing that preliminary job in Eastern Europe. . . . To push the Russian power back to its old borders would be to clear Eastern Europe again for German commercial exploitation and imperialist domination in partnership with the feudal and clerical elements. . . . Restrictions in intellectual freedom may be irksome for the intellectuals in the area, and Russian suspicion no doubt makes life difficult for the local native Communists. But there is no doubt that for the masses in Eastern Europe the new regimes have brought benefits in the shape of land, education, and jobs.

Today one rarely hears justifications for the continued Soviet domination of Eastern Europe along the lines spelled out by I.F. Stone (although it is not so rare for much of the blame to be placed on an overly aggressive America for having somehow "forced" the "paranoid" Soviets to impose their system on unwilling neighbors). But a line of reasoning similar to Stone's, only now usually restricted to the Soviet Union's efforts to stimulate revolution in the Third World, is often advanced to explain the importance of the Kremlin's military might.

Examples are legion. Saul Landau, a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), claims that the USSR's armed power and its demonstrated willingness to employ that power represent "the one insurance of [Third World] revolution." (Ironically, Landau said this in response to a denunciation of the crushing of Solidarity issued by none other than I.F. Stone.) Jeff Frieden, writing in *In These Times,* observes that the Soviet Union "has been a major force in world politics, as well as a valuable supporter of some Third World revolutions." Fred Halliday, a fellow at the IPS's Transnational Institute, also praises the Kremlin's support for revolutionary movements; his major complaint is Moscow's failure to back its proxies more vigorously in such areas as the Middle East. John Beverley, a theoretician for the New American Movement, one of two organizations which recently merged to form Democratic Socialists of America, writes that "With some exceptions, these revolutions or revolutionary movements could not have come to power and cannot maintain themselves in power without some help from the Soviet bloc. This means that whatever criticisms or reservations one might have about [the Soviet Union and its allies], they are still the main force in the world supporting the anti-imperialist struggle." Beverley notes that the period of détente was a propitious time for global revolution, listing Vietnam, Laos, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, and Grenada as gains; Portugal and Jamaica (the only two countries on the list where democracy has survived) as instances where the revolutionary impulse failed; and Afghanistan, Iran, and Cambodia as "important" but "deeply problematical for the Left." And Mike Davis, in an essay included in *Exterminism and Cold War,* a volume edited by the leader of the British "peace" movement, E.P. Thompson, perceives in the Soviet military build-up the means for extending "a regional shield to new revolutionary regimes." Finally, a more cautious appraisal of the Soviet Union's world role is provided by Robert Borosage, the director of the Institute for Policy Studies. While Borosage sees in the United States and the Soviet Union "systems . . . that lead to dead ends," he contends that the Soviets have spawned a "whole range" of "interesting social experiments," naming as examples Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Cuba, and Nicaragua. (Borosage's observations are especially strange given the fact that two of the cited countries have risen in rebellion against Soviet-imposed "experiments," while in every instance he cites, the level of prosperity has increased in direct ratio to the country's ability to free itself from the Soviet economic model.)

In these circles another commonly accepted argument which resembles the Wallaceite line of the 40's is that while the U.S. is superior to the Soviets insofar as guarantees of civil liberties and democratic freedoms are concerned, America is also the more militaristic of the two superpowers, and thus the more dangerous to world peace. This is a formula to which E.P. Thompson's followers are especially attached, and it carries a strong tactical appeal. First, it presupposes the primacy of peace over revolution; second, it suggests a superficial evenhandedness, a symmetry, useful in responding to charges that the peace movement's motivating impulse is anti-Americanism. Thompson himself has declared that the objectives of the peace movement are twofold: "In the East, a movement for freedom; in the West, a movement for peace."

How is it possible, one might well ask, for the U.S. to be both more democratic and more militarily aggressive, especially given the fact that the Soviet Union represses all expressions of opposition to its foreign policy? One answer is provided by Alan Wolfe, a member of the editorial board of the *Nation.* Wolfe's thesis is that democracy, or rather the "perverted" democracy which holds sway in the United States, is largely responsible for America's global belligerence. Democracy, he contends, "has become a major force for the perpetuation of the cold war; any elite fraction wishing to pursue a policy of militarization finds it rel-

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atively easy to fan the flames of popular discontent behind an arms build-up." Wolfe recognizes that the Soviet system suffers from various "deformities," but believes that "not much time need be spent on the subject," given the fact that the failures of Communism have been more "endlessly catalogued . . . than the ills of any other social system in human history." Indeed, it is these "deformities" which, Wolfe implies, enable the Soviets to conduct their foreign affairs in a more consistent and responsible way than the U.S. "Contrary to the theory of totalitarianism," he notes, "there is substantial evidence that the more open a society, the greater is its proclivity to practice an aggressive foreign policy." Conversely:

> As a highly centralized, authoritarian state, the Soviet Union practices a quite different brand of imperial politics from that of the United States. The absence of competing parties, combined with the lack of freedom of thought and expression, ironically removes one of the pressures toward inconsistent imperial behavior. Whereas the United States politicizes its path toward empire, the Soviet Union approaches its hegemony managerially.

PERHAPS no sector of American society has contributed more enthusiastic participants in the effort to reshape American conceptions about the Soviet Union than the churches. In recent years a steady procession of clergymen has visited the Soviet Union at the invitation of the country's officially-sanctioned religious organizations. In view of the USSR's unremitting, indeed escalating, persecution of religious believers, the conclusions drawn by some participants in these pilgrimages are often startling.

For example, the Reverend Paul Dinter, counselor to Catholic students at Columbia University, concluded after a tour of the USSR that the Soviets "have a perspective that is not diabolic or satanic." According to a report in the *Columbia Spectator*, Dinter observed peace demonstrations in the USSR which, he says, drew as many participants as similar demonstrations in the U.S. Although acknowledging that civil liberties are not honored there to the degree that they are here, he claims that the Soviet people are tolerant of official policies, having never enjoyed Western-style freedoms in the first place. Yuri Andropov serves a function similar to that of a "chairman of the corporation"; his leadership is largely economic, rather than political, in nature. Nor is there "the gross persecution of religious groups that we think there is"—a strange statement from a priest, given the fact that Catholics in Lithuania and the Ukraine are prime victims of government oppression. Father Dinter does concede that the situation of Jews is somewhat different, but minimizes the regime's culpability by noting that anti-Semitism is ingrained in Russian culture and is "not a religious matter."

Concerning Soviet anti-Semitism, Father Dinter has obviously missed the point. The distinguishing feature of the Kremlin's "anti-Zionism" crusade, and what makes it so thoroughly repulsive, is the fact that it is a *political* phenomenon, initiated and orchestrated by the party leadership in the service of domestic and foreign-policy objectives. Outside the countries of the Arab world, the Soviet Union is just about the only nation to have instituted a policy of *official* anti-Semitism, the most recent manifestation of which is the establishment of a government-sanctioned anti-Zionist committee, one of whose spokesmen saw fit to dredge up the myth that Jews cooperated with Hitler in planning their own destruction.

Another recent visitor to the USSR was Bishop James Armstrong, president of the National Council of Churches (NCC), who headed an NCC delegation which visited Russian Orthodox churches and officials in Moscow and Leningrad. Bishop Armstrong reported on his return to the United States that he was "encouraged" by the "vigor and dedication of the religious community" in the Soviet Union. The NCC leader was sensitive to the possibility that he might be labeled a dupe or (perhaps recalling the furor generated by the Soviet tour of Billy Graham) a simpleton. Nevertheless, he felt compelled to note that while "People can talk about 'plants' in the churches," he himself was most impressed by "the evident piety in the faces of the people as they participated in the services." What the regime's domination of the Orthodox church and the devotion of individual worshipers have to do with one another was not made clear. Bishop Armstrong also expressed pleasant surprise that the services were attended by many men and young people; religious belief was not, after all, restricted to a dwindling number of elderly women.

If only he had realized it, Bishop Armstrong was on to something of potential significance. There has, in fact, been something of a resurgence of religious faith in the Communist world, a development which the party leadership views with deep apprehension. In regimes where an avowed belief in God is almost certain to result in discrimination in employment or schooling, the very act of attending church is a political statement. Moreover, the churches in several East European countries (in addition, obviously, to Poland) are demanding increased latitude to speak out on issues of sociopolitical consequence. Thus the Evangelical church has begun to criticize, cautiously, the pervasive militarism of East German society.

For its part, the Kremlin is as scrupulous in its efforts to control the churches as it is in assuring party domination of trade unions, peace committees, and other ostensibly independent institutions. Those who refuse to knuckle under—a group which includes many Catholics and fundamentalists but also a large number of believers

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affiliated with denominations that are members of the National Council of Churches—are subjected to a degree of repression which is unusual even by Soviet standards.

The NCC itself is aware of the difficulties faced by believers in the Communist world; it has justified its visits to the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and other Communist countries on the laudable ground that its policy seeks "to help minimize the isolation of the Christian church and to strengthen its hand." In practice, unfortunately, emphasis is placed on forging closer bonds with the puppet official church leadership, a policy which, at least in the Soviet case, serves mainly to legitimize "church leaders" whose major function is to promote the domestic and international objectives of the state. Nor is there evidence of a change in this policy; the major result of the NCC's most recent visit to the USSR was a decision to expand the East-West exchange program with a particular eye toward developing "practical means" to support each other's peacemaking efforts.

ANOTHER project putatively aimed at the reduction of international tensions which has been given the NCC's indirect support is a study, *Must Walls Divide?*, written by the Reverend James Will. Published by the NCC's Friendship Press, *Must Walls Divide?* has been widely circulated by the Methodists, Presbyterians, and the United Church of Christ as basic resource material for their international-affairs programs. The study's declared purpose is to contribute to the lowering of ideological barriers which divide East from West. In reality, many of the arguments represent a reformulation of standard Soviet propaganda with the intent of convincing dubious Western church people that Communism, despite its shortcomings, is at least the equal of the democratic system in the provision of basic human rights—and in spiritual matters as well. Among other things, Reverend Will is the director of Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe, the NCC affiliate of the Christian Peace Conference (CPC). He describes the CPC as "a cooperative member of the ecumenical movement," which emerged from the "depths of the cold war to focus the task of the churches squarely on peace and especially on disarmament." In fact, the CPC is highly selective in its peacemaking work. As George Weigel has pointed out in a study prepared for the Institute on Religion and Democracy, the CPC "has had a long and ignominious history of faithfully putting forward the Soviet party line on every major issue." When some CPC leaders did summon up the will to protest the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, they were replaced with more pliant types. So pliant indeed, that in the case of Afghanistan the CPC criticized, not the Soviets for their invasion, but the United States, Pakistan, and China for their "destabilization" of that country. According to a CPC statement:

> The progressive forces in Afghanistan have themselves turned against such attempts to annul the achievements of the April Revolution. In the light of the analysis of this situation, the reasons which made the government of Afghanistan ask the Soviet Union for help and which made the Soviet Union honor this request become understandable.

On the question of human rights, always a touchy issue for the Kremlin and its apologists, Reverend Will asserts that Christians should support the concept of "holistic human rights," which embraces social and economic rights as well as political rights and civil liberties. Since no nation or political system in human history has fulfilled the high standards of Reverend Will's "holistic human rights," the effect of this formula is not to broaden the human-rights debate but to smother it. Which, from the Soviet view, is just fine.

Reverend Will also places the atrocities of the Stalin era in a new perspective. The terror waged against the Soviet people, he writes, "though compressed into a shorter period and thus, more terrible, . . . was not unlike the oppression of men, women, and children in mine and factory—to say nothing of outright slavery—which accompanied early industrialization in Europe and North America." Other conclusions reached by Reverend Will include the following: "The use of ideological anti-Communism to justify excessive arms expenditures in the West is just as bad" as the persecution of Soviet dissidents and the supporters of the Prague Spring; "East European churches safeguard carefully their traditions in relation to state ideology and support the ecumenical struggle for peace and justice. North American churches, in contrast, often blend their ideology with the civil religion which keeps them at a greater distance from the ecumenical search for shalom"; Communist regimes have been roughly as successful as the European democracies in meeting the economic needs of their people.

The most disturbing aspect of *Must Walls Divide?* is not that a particular clergyman has written a blatant apology for one of the most dreadful political systems in human history, but the fact that these views have been sanctioned and circulated by several of America's largest Protestant denominations. At a more fundamental level, the attitude of those churchmen who have come to believe, as the Reverend William Sloane Coffin recently put it, that "we and the Soviets, if not one in love, are one in sin," raises serious questions about their belief in the values of their own institution.

It is by now well known that the persecution of Christians by the Kremlin is not an episodic occurrence but reflects an everyday, purposeful, and systematic campaign to eliminate the in-

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fluence of the church from all aspects of life, save the most narrowly circumscribed religious dimension, and an effort to transform the church into an instrument of the Kremlin's foreign policy. One would expect that the fact that the devout continue to fill the churches should be essentially meaningless to Western clergymen who, concerning countries maintaining friendly relations with the U.S., have expressed the strongest condemnation of efforts to limit the churches' political voice.

IRONICALLY, the one movement which embraced egalitarian, religious, and democratic values—the Solidarity trade union in Poland—aroused little passion among liberal American churchmen. Here the churches were not alone; never in recent times has the utter bankruptcy of what passes for the Left been so clearly revealed as in the reaction to events in Poland. All the elements of a revolutionary workers' movement were present: nonviolence, broad support, a program stressing popular participation in economic decision-making, commitment to freedom of speech and civil liberties, with a young and charismatic leadership laboring against overwhelming odds to forge a new society out of the rubble of a cynical and corrupt order. Yet the response of the Left can most charitably be characterized as ambivalent. A few publications, most notably *In These Times*, gave rather straightforward support to the forces around Solidarity, and a handful of unaffiliated liberals and radicals actually visited the Polish revolution first hand.

More instructive, however, is the contrast between the response to developments in Poland and in Nicaragua. While no more than a trickle of American political activists visited Poland, innumerable delegations of churchmen, peace activists, political figures, and liberals have made the trek to Nicaragua, and most have returned with glowing reports about the new society arising there.

Yet on practically every ground, Solidarity should have been more appealing than the Sandinistas—that is, if we take the proclaimed ideals of the Left seriously. Solidarity was (and is) committed to nonviolence and anti-militarist values; for the Sandinistas, the militarization of Nicaraguan society was the first order of the day. Solidarity spawned the freest and most lively press to have ever existed in a Communist country; the Sandinistas have almost extinguished press liberties. Under Solidarity, civil liberties were expanded; under the Sandinistas, the emphasis has been on social control. Solidarity wanted to free the economy from the crushing weight of a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy; the Sandinistas have contributed to their country's chaos by bringing more and more of the economy under state direction.

THE double standards of the Left, and further echoes of the 1940's, were on display this past May at a weeklong "U.S.-USSR Bilateral Exchange Conference" held in Minneapolis under the sponsorship of the Institute for Policy Studies. The conference brought together 27 Soviet and a slightly larger group of American leaders of the peace and disarmament movements. Predictably, given the sponsors' diligent efforts to wrap the event in the mantle of people-to-people statesmanship, the conference drew the wholehearted support of the political and community leadership of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. An editorial in the St. Paul *Pioneer Press Dispatch* said that the conference was "commendable, since it indicates a nongovernmental effort to achieve some degree of understanding between our highly divergent cultures." The problem is that only one side was nongovernmental; the Soviet delegation, to a man, consisted of representatives of the state and party.

Among the Soviet delegates were a Russian Orthodox priest who noted that freedom of religion was inscribed in the Soviet constitution; a teacher who boasted of the superiority of the Soviet educational system; several journalists who insisted that Soviet citizens were better informed about international affairs than Americans; and assorted "academics" affiliated with the various institutions which study and monitor developments in the U.S.

If the Soviet delegation consisted of representatives of the Soviet government, the American delegation, by contrast, could almost be described as anti-government, or certainly opposed to the policies of the Reagan administration. It included three Carter administration officials: Patricia Derian, Carter's Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights; Carter's UN Ambassador Donald McHenry (a conference co-chairman); and Paul Warnke, Carter's director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, who did not attend the meeting itself but did contribute a paper on disarmament. The remainder of the delegation was balanced between members of the liberal establishment and representatives of the Left. The former included Minneapolis Mayor Donald Fraser, Episcopal Bishop Paul Moore, the Reverend William Sloane Coffin, Jerome Grossman of the Council for a Livable World, Seymour Melman of Columbia University, and Randall Forsberg, generally considered the architect of the freeze movement. Those of a more radical bent included Cora Weiss, Richard Barnet, Marcus Raskin, Michael Klare, and Robert Borosage, all directly or indirectly connected with the IPS.

As might be expected, the Soviets, no matter what the forum, no matter what the issue, no matter how respectfully the question was posed, did not concede an inch regarding alleged shortcomings of their society. When Marcus Raskin politely asked why peace organizations which

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criticized the government were not permitted to function in the Soviet Union, Vikenty Matveev, a columnist for *Izvestia*, responded with a straightforward lie, asserting that millions of Soviet citizens participate in "hundreds and thousands" of independent peace committees. Those Soviet citizens who had launched a short-lived nongovernmental peace group (and had been quickly repressed) were dismissed as an irrelevant group of youths whose only desire was to emigrate to Israel. Their names had been forgotten in the Soviet Union, Matveev noted, adding: "They cease, so to speak, to exist."

During a public forum which was sponsored as part of the week's events, things came somewhat unglued. Although the session had been advertised as focusing on disarmament, the issues raised by the audience (comprised largely of supporters of Soviet Jewry and émigrés from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe) zeroed in on the repressive nature of the Soviet system and Soviet imperialism. Some in the audience jeered at the Soviets, calling them "liars" and "propagandists," which, given Soviet statements, was altogether accurate. For example, when asked why Jews are not permitted to emigrate, Genrikh Trofimenko responded with a straight face that emigration is guaranteed in the Soviet constitution, and "Whoever wants to emigrate from the Soviet Union can."

The Soviets were furious at this unanticipated breach of etiquette. Vitaly I. Kobysh, an officer in the Department of Information of the Soviet Communist party, said that he was "sure that some of the people we saw there today were Nazis." He called the incident a piece of "concrete reality" about America, prime evidence of why "America is not yet ready to say it will not make a nuclear first-strike." He also pointed out that Hitler had "stayed in power through elections." The chief of the Soviet delegation, Mikhail Milshtein, blamed the panel moderator, Harrison Salisbury, for having given the floor to "certain elements." "We can assure you that nothing like this ever happens in the USSR," he added.

And what was the response of the Americans? Bishop Moore was "deeply ashamed" and "deeply humiliated" by the behavior of the audience, but consoled himself "with the knowledge that this same thing has happened to many of us as well." Another American, businessman Erwin Salk, was equally distressed: "I thought about sending notes to the Soviets telling them of Andrew Young's description of the thousands of political prisoners in American prisons, of the blacks, Hispanics, and native Americans who are on our death rows. I thought of telling them of the sterilized Puerto Rican women. . . . We are here trying to talk about making a contract to stay alive. Then, after that, we can get on with selling things back and forth to each other."

For Reverend William Sloane Coffin, the injection of human rights into the discussion was a "mistake." "It's almost impossible, given human nature, to raise the human-rights issue without self-righteousness," he declared. Moreover, he said, reductions in armaments would lead to human-rights gains across the board, for "women and blacks and poor folk and the unemployed" in the United States and for Soviet dissidents, who will "fare better when the Soviet Union feels less threatened." Randall Forsberg was also dubious about the wisdom of raising human-rights concerns on the grounds that "There tends to be a list of accusations from the West" over violations by the Communists. As a result, debates over human rights inevitably take on "a pointed and unpleasant and one-sided form."

To give credit where it is due, at least one member of the American delegation, Patricia Derian, was clearly distressed by the behavior of the Soviets, and was willing to say so. In a Washington *Post* column written after the conference, Miss Derian described the Soviet presentations as "stylized and carefully executed," "weightless," "ceremonial," containing no "concession of imperfection." In such meetings with the Soviets, "there is no such thing as an 'unofficial' delegation." The conference had left her with feelings of "exhaustion, exasperation, and creeping cynicism." Miss Derian did not even claim, as others did, that private, informal get-togethers with the Soviets had produced any breakthroughs of substance.

Although she did not come right out and say so, the sum of Miss Derian's observations suggested that the conference was a total failure, that is, if one took seriously the declared intention of the sponsors to promote a genuine dialogue between the two sides. Nonetheless, Miss Derian's conclusion was that such meetings must continue to be held:

> We must meet because our diversity seems mad to them and their singular intolerance of diversity seems mad to us. We are weak and unpredictable as only madmen can be, to them. They are strong and predictable as only madmen can be, to us. If there is another reality, we must be able to comprehend it. . . . The only way to comprehension and knowledge is experience. It comes with meeting the same people over and over again, getting past opening statements . . . to whatever else is there.

Unlike some of her colleagues on the American delegation, Miss Derian clearly prefers the pluralism and democratic freedoms of the United States to the Soviet system. Yet her experiences in Minneapolis have taught her nothing. If anything, her conclusions serve to reinforce the widespread perception that confusion and lack of direction crippled the Carter administration's foreign policy. If the U.S. delegation appeared "weak" in Minneapolis, it was due to the disturbingly weak

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faith in democracy exhibited by a number of our most prominent delegates. The same two groups could meet one hundred times; the only accomplishment would be further concessions by the Americans and further stonewalling by the Soviets.

Such, at any rate, was the result of the Minneapolis conference. The one major innovative proposal advanced there, offered by Randall Forsberg, called for token (and as Mrs. Forsberg herself acknowledged, strategically meaningless) reductions by the Soviets as a means of galvanizing popular sentiment against deployment of the Pershing and cruise missiles in Europe. Mrs. Forsberg's goal, as stated at the conference, was to trigger "sufficient division" within the U.S., Great Britain, and West Germany so that their governments "would be forced to delay the deployment and to try and come up with some kind of face-saving maneuver in the arms-control negotiations." In any event, Mrs. Forsberg's proposal and similar ideas advanced by other American delegates were flatly rejected by the Soviets, one of whom commented that suggestions for unilateral Soviet action, no matter how symbolic in nature, don't "look very serious."

IT GOES without saying that a successful foreign policy requires reliable information about and accurate analysis of developments in the Soviet Union and the Communist world generally. But there is little information or analysis in the current effort to brush up the Soviet Union's image that will benefit our policymakers. Contrary to much of what we have read or heard lately from participants in this effort, Soviet policy has been marked by an increase in domestic coercion and global aggression. Moreover, it is precisely on issues of special concern to the Left that the Soviet record is most shabby. The peace movement, for example, has objected to a modest increase in ROTC programs in American schools and universities as reflecting a resurgent militarism. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, boasts that military training is compulsory in *every school*. In Khrushchev's time, playing with war toys was discouraged; today, it is routine for children to be trained with real weapons.

Or take the question of workers' rights. Here is one aspect of Soviet society where something new and potentially significant does seem to be taking place. Since the ascension of Yuri Andropov, a campaign stressing worker discipline has been enunciated and, to a degree, enforced, with police combing the streets to ferret out "shirkers." Meanwhile, a number of worker dissidents languish in prisons and psychiatric hospitals; their cases have been publicized by the general press, though ignored by the political press of the Left. Where are the incisive, demystifying analyses on which radicals pride themselves? Given the fact that almost all Communist regimes adopt the Soviet labor model, or at least extensive parts of it, one might expect this to be a subject worthy of something approaching the intense scrutiny devoted to capitalism. Instead, Marcus Raskin inexplicably writes of "increasing official tolerance in Moscow for open expression of popular discontent, even among workers."

William Phillips, the editor of *Partisan Review*, has written that "the Soviet Union has transformed what used to be socialist doctrine into a system of maneuvers justifying totalitarian ends but cloaked in a humanitarian and semi-socialist rhetoric." The key word is maneuvers. There are no new ideas, theories, or doctrines in the effort to provide the Soviets with a slightly more human face. No noble ideas are expressed about the future of mankind. In this respect, the new apologists for the Soviet Union are if anything worse than their forebears of the 1940's.

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The Famine the "Times" Couldn't Find

Marco Carynnyk

My editor was dubious. I had been explaining that fifty years ago, in the spring and summer of 1933, Ukraine, the country of my forebears, had suffered a horrendous catastrophe. In a fertile, populous country famed as the granary of Europe, a great famine had mowed down a sixth, a fifth, and in some regions even a fourth of the inhabitants. Natural forces—drought, flood, blight—have been at least contributory causes of most famines. This one had been entirely man-made, entirely the result of a dictator's determination to collectivize agriculture and prepare for war by crushing even potential opposition. The consequences of this famine, I said, are still being felt.

Erudite, polyglot, herself a refugee from tyranny, the editor remained skeptical. "But isn't all this. . . ." She leaned back in her chair and smiled brightly. "Isn't all this a bit recondite?"

My face must have flushed. *Recondite*? Suddenly I knew the impotent anger Jews and Armenians have felt. Millions of my countrymen had been murdered, and their deaths were being dismissed as obscure and little-known.

Later I realized that the editor had said more than she had intended. The famine of 1933 was rationalized and concealed when it was taking its toll, and it is still hidden away and trivialized today. George Orwell need not have limited his observation to British intellectuals when he remarked that "huge events like the Ukraine famine of 1933, involving the deaths of millions of people, have actually escaped the attention of the majority of English Russophiles."

Still later, after I had set about uncovering the whole story by delving into newspaper files and archives and talking to people who had witnessed the events of 1933, I came to understand how Walter Duranty and the New York *Times* helped Stalin to make the famine "recondite."

Walter Duranty, an Englishman by birth, worked for the New York *Times* from 1913 to 1934, and then continued with the paper on a retainer basis until 1945. One of the best-known journalists in the world, he was certainly the most famous correspondent to be stationed in Moscow. The books that he wrote about the Soviet Union sold enormous numbers of copies—the revealingly titled *I Write As I Please* became a best-seller—and influenced both public attitudes and government policies. In April 1932, Duranty was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his "dispassionate, interpretative reporting of the news from Russia." The announcement said that his dispatches were "marked by scholarship, profundity, impartiality, sound judgment, and exceptional clarity" and were "excellent examples of the best type of foreign correspondence." An Englishman who spent a decade in Moscow spoke for many admirers when he dedicated a book to Duranty, "the doyen of Moscow correspondents at whose feet we all sit in matters Sovietic."

Not everyone agreed with the Pulitzer jury. Indeed, controversy began to surround Duranty within a year after he arrived in Moscow, and continues to this day. Eugene Lyons, then the United Press correspondent in Moscow, accused Duranty of "amazing sophistry." Malcolm Muggeridge, who was reporting for the Manchester *Guardian* at the time, thought that Duranty was "the greatest liar of any journalist that I have met in fifty years of journalism." The American journalist Joseph Alsop also charged Duranty with "lying like a trooper."

Yet none of Duranty's critics has furnished proof that he deliberately misrepresented the facts about the Soviet Union. Now such evidence is at hand. It has to do with Duranty's reports about the nature and extent of the famine in Ukraine. And it raises disturbing questions about the reliability of even the most distinguished newspapers.

Until the famine struck Ukraine and the adjacent North Caucasus (much of which had been settled by Ukrainians), foreign correspondents were able to travel there as they chose. Malcolm Muggeridge explained to me that when he decided to investigate the famine everyone in Moscow was talking about, he simply bought a train ticket and without informing the authorities set off for Kiev and Rostov.

Marco Carynnyk has published poetry and criticism and has edited or translated ten books, among them Leonid Plyushch's *History's Carnival* (1979) and Victor Nekipelov's *Institute of Fools* (1980). He has recently received a Visiting Grant from the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies in Washington and is writing a book and filming a documentary about the famine of 1933.

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Muggeridge's blunt account—which he got past the censor by sending it out in a diplomatic bag, only to have it "mutilated," as he told me, by his editors—appeared in the Manchester *Guardian* in March 1933:

> The population is starving. "Hunger" was the word I heard most. Peasants begged a lift on the train from one station to another, sometimes their bodies swollen up—a disagreeable sight—from lack of food. . . . The little towns and villages seemed just numb and the people in too desperate a condition even actively to resent what had happened. . . . Cattle and horses dead; fields neglected; meager harvest despite moderately good climatic conditions; all the grain that was produced taken by the government; now no bread at all, no bread anywhere, nothing much else either; despair and bewilderment.

Muggeridge's articles produced no response beyond virulent attacks by Soviet sympathizers (an argument about whether a famine had occurred heated the correspondence columns of the *Guardian* for several months). Moscow nonetheless began to discourage journalists from visiting Ukraine. Sir Esmond Ovey, the British ambassador to the USSR, reported the restriction to London on March 5, 1933:

> Internal situation is not promising. Conditions in Kuban [in the North Caucasus] have been described to me by recent English visitor as appalling and as resembling an armed camp in a desert—no work, no grain, no cattle, no draft horses, only idle peasants or soldiers. Another correspondent who had visited Kuban was strongly dissuaded from visiting the Ukraine where conditions are apparently as bad although apathy is greater. In fact all correspondents have now been "advised" by the Press Department of Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to remain in Moscow.

Although the travel ban remained in effect all spring and summer, Western correspondents in Moscow did not report the restriction on their journalistic freedom for over six months. Only on August 21, 1933 did William Henry Chamberlin announce in the *Guardian* that he and his colleagues had been ordered not to leave the capital without submitting a detailed itinerary and obtaining authorization from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs:

> Your correspondent received personal evidence that this rule is no empty formality when he was refused permission today to visit country districts in Ukrainia and North Caucasus regions, which he visited several times in previous years without objection from the central or local authorities. This is not an isolated case of restriction, as your correspondent knows of an instance that occurred some time ago when two American correspondents were forbidden to visit Ukrainia . . . and several correspondents of various nationalities were warned not to leave Moscow without special permission.

The London *Times* correspondent in Riga verified Chamberlin's account. "One of the chief purposes of this [ban]," he wrote on August 21,

> is to screen the real conditions in the countryside from foreign eyes. . . . [Journalists] can still undertake journeys, but only after obtaining a special permit for an approved route, and they are always escorted by Communist officials. Permits for some of the chief grain areas are now very difficult or impossible to obtain.

The Associated Press also confirmed Chamberlin's report. Although the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs was claiming a bumper crop, it had refused permission to Chamberlin to observe the harvest in Ukraine and the North Caucasus:

> Mr. Chamberlin, one of the best-known American correspondents, who has lived here eleven years, has often traveled in those regions. There was a food shortage there the past winter. Several months ago two other American correspondents were forbidden to make a trip to the Ukraine.

And Frederick Birchall, the New York *Times* reporter in Berlin, related on August 24 that a correspondent for his paper in another capital who had applied for a tourist visa to the Soviet Union was turned down on the grounds that journalists were forbidden to travel as tourists, while an American correspondent stationed in Moscow who had asked for a visa to return there via Odessa was told it would be granted to him only if he pledged not to leave the train en route.

In September 1933, as the new harvest was brought in, compulsory grain deliveries to the state were reduced; the famine began to taper off because the farmers were finally allowed to keep some of their produce, and the travel restrictions were lifted. Edward Coote, a member of the staff of the British chancery in Moscow, commented on the lifting of the ban in a dispatch to the British Foreign Office on September 12:

> The foreign press has, I hear, reported that the ban on journeys in the interior by foreign journalists has been lifted, but this is not the whole truth. Mr. Duranty, the New York *Times* correspondent, whom the Soviet Union [is] probably more anxious to conciliate than any other, returned from abroad in August, having heard that journeys in the interior by foreign correspondents had been prohibited, and thereupon addressed a letter to M. Litvinov protesting against this prohibition and stating that he intended to tour in the grain districts of the Ukraine on a certain date in September, accompanied by a colleague. In due course he received orally from the Press Department an assurance that he might travel on a certain fixed date later in the month. Mr. Duranty professed to be much irritated by this action, which he felt had cut the ground from under his feet by obliging him to recognize a ban upon his movements which infringed the liberty

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of the press. Nevertheless, he and his colleague have set out happily enough, and I have no doubt that, as a totally unqualified agricultural observer, he will have no difficulty in obtaining sufficient quantitative experience in tour hours to enable him to say whatever he may wish to say on his return.

Duranty had in fact determined what he would say about the "famine scare," as he repeatedly called it, long before this trip to Ukraine. In March 1932, when Eugene Lyons reported an early sign of famine to New York, Duranty apprised the *Times* that there was no famine anywhere, although "partial crop failures" occurred in some regions.

By November, the year's harvest had been brought in and Communist activists were roaming the countryside, stripping the farmers of their grain. Duranty admitted that there was a shortage of food, but insisted that "there is no famine or actual starvation, nor is there likely to be." And the food shortages that did exist, he argued, were the fault of the peasants, who had fled from the villages to the towns and construction sites, leaving the harvest unreaped and the grain rotting in the fields. But it would be a mistake, concluded Duranty, to exaggerate the gravity of the situation:

> The Russians have tightened their belts before to a far greater extent than is likely to be needed this winter. If there is no international disturbance to complicate matters, remedies doubtless will be found, and the Soviet program, though menaced and perhaps retarded, will not be seriously affected.

Then in April 1933, when the famine was raging in full force because repeated grain collections by the government had stripped the countryside bare (although they claimed to be fulfilling the state grain quotas, the collectors often confiscated baked bread, emptied pots of porridge, and removed kitchen utensils, clothes, and furniture), Duranty rebutted a report brought out by Gareth Jones. A young Welshman who had studied under the eminent historian of Russia, Sir Bernard Pares, and served as an aide to Lloyd George, Jones investigated the famine by the simple expedient of packing a knapsack with as much canned food as he could carry and setting out on foot to explore the villages in the Kharkov region. On his return from the Soviet Union, Jones announced his ghastly findings at a press conference in Berlin and a lecture at Chatham House in London.

Like Muggeridge before him, Jones found severe famine. Everywhere he went he heard the cry, "There is no bread, we are dying." Millions of lives were being menaced:

> The villages which I visited alone on foot were by no means in the hardest-hit parts, but in almost every village the bread supply had run out two months earlier, the potatoes were almost exhausted, and there was not enough coarse beet, which was formerly used as cattle fodder but has now become a staple food of the population, to last until the next harvest. . . . In each village I received the same information —namely, that many were dying of famine and that about four-fifths of the cattle and the horses had perished. . . . Nor shall I forget the swollen stomachs of the children in the cottages in which I slept.

Duranty quickly dismissed Jones's "big scare story." Yet he scoffed so cleverly that he both denied and confirmed Jones's eyewitness account. On the one hand, Duranty implied that Jones's story had been inspired by British sources in retaliation for the Soviet arrest of six Englishmen who had been employed by the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Company on construction projects in the USSR. On the other hand, Duranty agreed when Jones said that "there was virtually no bread in the villages he had visited and that the adults were haggard, gaunt, and discouraged."

Several paragraphs later Duranty set about justifying the famine:

> But—to put it brutally—you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs, and the Bolshevist leaders are just as indifferent to the casualties that may be involved in their drive toward socialization as any general during the world war who ordered a costly attack to show his superiors that he and his division possessed the proper soldierly spirit. In fact, the Bolsheviki are more indifferent because they are animated by fanatical convictions.

Having admitted that the regime was waging a war against the Ukrainian peasants, Duranty proceeded to explain away the casualties. Jones, he said, had based his report on a tour of the villages. Duranty, however, had more reliable information: he had inquired in Soviet commissariats and foreign embassies and tabulated the impressions of both Russian and foreign friends. And here were the facts:

> There is a serious food shortage throughout the country, with occasional cases of well-managed state or collective farms. The big cities and the army are adequately supplied with food. There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition. . . . In short, conditions are definitely bad in certain sections—Ukraine, North Caucasus, and Lower Volga. The rest of the country is on short rations but nothing worse. These conditions are bad, but there is no famine.

Duranty, to be sure, did not act alone in trying to discredit Jones. The home offices of the American correspondents had all cabled urgent queries after Jones announced his findings. But preparations were under way for the Metropolitan-Vickers trial, and gaining access to the courtroom was more important for the Americans than reporting the famine. As Eugene Lyons put it, "The

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need to remain on friendly terms with the censors, at least for the duration of the trial, was for all of us a compelling professional necessity."

Meeting the correspondents in one of their hotel rooms, Konstantin Umansky, the head of the Press Department of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, worked out with them a formula for denying Jones's account. Before the evening was over, vodka and snacks had been ordered. The "celebration"—the word is Lyons's—lasted until early morning. By the time the trial had ended (all the Britons were released), the American correspondents had forgotten that they no longer needed to remain on "friendly terms" with the censors and did not bother to retract their attack against Jones. "Throwing down Jones," Lyons lamented,

> was as unpleasant a chore as fell to any of us in years of juggling facts to please dictatorial regimes. But throw him down we did, unanimously and in almost identical formulas of equivocation. Poor Gareth Jones must have been the most surprised human being alive when the facts he so painstakingly garnered from our mouths were snowed under by our denials.

IN EARLY April 1933, Duranty again bruited prosperity and abundance. "In the excitement over the spring sowing campaign and the reports of an increased food shortage," he announced,

> a fact that has been almost overlooked is that the production of coal, pig iron, steel, oil, automobiles, tractors, locomotives, and machine tools has increased by 20 to 35 percent during recent months. That is the most effective proof that the food shortage as a whole is less grave than was believed.

The issue of the New York *Times* that carried this sophism* also brought a plea for help from a Katherine Schutock in Jackson Heights, New York, who pointed out that Duranty's denial of starvation was contradicted by letters from Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the Lower Volga region. "The people who write such pathetic letters," noted Schutock,

> are not looking for help because it cannot reach them. Money cannot reach them, and if it does they receive only half of what they sign for. Receipt of help from America only gets them into trouble with the Cheka [secret police]. Most of the letters I have seen end thus: "If you do not hear from us again, you can be sure we are not alive. We are either getting it for [writing] this letter, or we are through. The agony of living and dying of hunger is so painful and so long. What torture it is to live in hunger and know you are dying slowly of hunger."

Throughout the spring and summer of 1933, demographers have estimated, Ukrainian peasants were dying at the rate of 25,000 a day, or 1,000 an hour, or 17 a minute. (In World War I, by comparison, about 6,000 people were killed every day.) Country lanes and city streets were littered with corpses—"stacked in the snow like logs," one eyewitness told me—and special brigades hastily dug mass graves in remote areas where they doused the bodies with gasoline and set them on fire. Ukraine that year was one vast hell. The New York *Times*, however, made absolutely no reference to the situation for more than a month, when it published a letter from Jones replying to Duranty's denial of the famine.

Standing by his claim that a severe famine was in progress, Jones pointed out that he had spoken with foreign journalists and technical experts, hundreds of peasants, and between twenty and thirty diplomats, all of whom had agreed that starvation was widespread:

> But [the diplomats] are not allowed to express their views in the press, and therefore remain silent. Journalists, on the other hand, are allowed to write, but the censorship has turned them into masters of euphemism and understatement. Hence they give "famine" the polite name of "food shortage" and "starving to death" is softened down to read as "widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition."

Duranty, undaunted, continued to pooh-pooh reports of starvation. Visiting Odessa, he asserted that the food situation was "undoubtedly better" than had been reported. In a town near Kiev peasant women were offering roast chicken; in Odessa the bread ration had been increased, and peasants were marketing eggs and vegetables:

> It is an old story, which the writer first heard on the Volga during the famine in the summer of 1921. Everywhere they said, "Things here are desperate, and unless we get relief we will die before Christmas"—which was true enough. Then we asked them, "But are people dying here now?" And they replied, "No, not here yet, but if you go to the village of So-and-So you will find hardly anyone alive." We went to said village and heard exactly the same story. "Here we are desperate, though not yet dying, but at So-and-So conditions are frightful. . . ." Though conditions are terribly hard, there is no sign of real famine conditions or that people are dying in the streets, as is reported in Moscow.

In June, when he was forced to defend himself against a charge of receiving concessions from the Soviet government, Duranty took the opportunity to deny an account in the London newspapers that the victims of the famine were fleeing to Moscow in search of food and dying in the streets. Seeing in the reports of famine "a cam-

* A sophism because by referring to "the food shortage as a whole" and by not specifying a geographic location, Duranty concealed the fact that the Ukrainian countryside was starving. Workers and civil servants in the cities were undernourished, but in order to maintain production the regime did give them ration cards entitling them to a bowl of soup and about two pounds of bread a day.

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paign of calumny that has scarcely been equaled since Nero raised Rome against the Christians—or Hitler Germany against the Jews," Duranty called the talk about corpses in the streets of Moscow "utterly untrue." Yet the diplomats whom he cited as a source for his claim that there were no deaths from starvation confirmed the exact opposite. "Even in Moscow itself, which is favored above all places in the Union in the matter of food, there are deaths from starvation," the British chargé d'affaires reported on July 17. "An English lady, who is studying Soviet hospitality and welfare work, has herself come upon two corpses in the street of persons who had just died as a direct result of lack of food."

Moreover, when a newspaper in Riga reported in August that the starvation and suffering were comparable to the famine of 1921, Duranty denounced the assertion as a "fundamental absurdity." Duranty also managed to slip into this story the standard Soviet insinuation that the famine reports were inspired by Nazi Germany: "The accession of Adolf Hitler to power brought new hope—and in some cases new money—to Russian émigré circles in Germany, the Baltic States, and elsewhere. These émigrés—like some other more disinterested observers of Soviet affairs—cannot see the woods for the trees and are only too ready to confuse causes and effects."

Yet even as he ridiculed the increasingly frequent eyewitness accounts of a devastating famine, Duranty half-heartedly admitted that the "food shortage" had taken a toll and, salting his articles with such cautious euphemisms as deaths due to "lowered resistance" and "malnutrition," ventured to estimate the losses:

> The excellent harvest about to be gathered shows that any report of a famine in Russia is today an exaggeration or malignant propaganda. The food shortage which has affected almost the whole population in the last year, and particularly the grain-producing provinces—that is, the Ukraine, North Caucasus, the Lower Volga region—has, however, caused heavy loss of life. . . . The death rate rose during the winter and early spring to nearly four times the normal rate, which runs about 20 to 25 per 1,000 annually for the Soviet Union. Among peasants and others not receiving bread rations, conditions were certainly not better. So with a total population in the Ukraine, North Caucasus, and Lower Volga of upward of 40 million the normal death rate would have been about 1 million. Lacking official figures, it is conservative to suppose that this was at least trebled last year in those provinces and considerably increased for the Soviet Union as a whole.

The careful reader (and how many of Duranty's readers cared to untangle these sentences?) will note that he avoided giving an absolute figure of famine losses. But since he announced that the normal death rate would have been about 1 million and that this was trebled, we must assume that he was hinting at 2 million famine victims.

In September 1933, when he received the privilege of being the first correspondent to be allowed into the famine regions after the travel ban was lifted, Duranty set out by car for Rostov in the North Caucasus and Kharkov and Kiev in Ukraine. His public view of the "famine scare," which he presented in seven articles in the *Times* between September 11 and 20, 1933, was not changed by what he saw.

"Whatever the situation was here last winter or spring," Duranty cabled on September 11,

> there is no doubt Rostov-on-Don is a busy, flourishing city today. Local officials and newspaper men scout [deride] the stories of hunger epidemics and a much increased death rate earlier this year. They emphasize that half the city's population now receives at least one meal daily in factory and other "mass restaurants."

Two days later Duranty suggested that the North Caucasus was a land of milk and honey:

> The use of the word "famine" in connection with the North Caucasus is a sheer absurdity. There a bumper crop is being harvested as fast as tractors, horses, oxen, men, women, and children can work. . . . There are plump babies in the nurseries or gardens of the collectives. Older children are watching fat calves or driving cattle. . . . Village markets are flowing with eggs, fruit, poultry, vegetables, milk, and butter at prices far lower than in Moscow. A child can see that this is not famine but abundance.
>
> This makes it all the more inexplicable that the Moscow authorities have restricted freedom of travel for any correspondent, even on the plaintive grounds that "some correspondents earlier wrote most distressing articles. . . ." For the writer's part, he believes the distressing facts were exaggerated. He thinks he himself exaggerated in saying the death rate in the North Caucasus, the Ukraine, and Lower Volga regions in the past year was three times above normal—at least as far as the North Caucasus was concerned.

Whatever his new estimate was (he again avoided citing absolute figures), Duranty maintained it for only two days. "Early last year, under the pressure of the war danger in the Far East," he wote from Kharkov,

> the authorities took too much grain from the Ukraine. Meanwhile, a large number of peasants thought they could change the Communist party's collectivization policy by refusing to cooperate. Those two circumstances together—the flight of some peasants and the passive resistance of others—produced a very poor harvest last year, and even part of that was never reaped. The situation in the winter was undoubtedly bad. Just as the writer considered that his death-rate figures for the North Caucasus were exaggerated, so he is inclined to believe that the estimate he made for the Ukraine was too low. [That estimate was three times the normal death rate.]*

* The bracketed passage is in the original *Times* story.

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Let us give this passage our attention. In the first sentence Duranty implied—quite correctly—that the authorities had caused the famine by stripping Ukraine of its grain. But they did so, he said, because they needed to stockpile food in case war with Japan broke out. Duranty presented this cause as if it were well known and needed no explanation. In fact, he was sending up a trial balloon. He had only hinted at fear of war with Japan as a cause of the famine in previous articles, and he mentioned it again only eleven years later, when he argued that the "man-made famine" (he used that phrase, although he enclosed it in quotation marks), if anything like a famine had taken place at all, was entirely due to the Red Army's need for food reserves.

In the second sentence of the passage, however, Duranty adroitly shifted the blame for the famine onto the peasants, who had produced a very poor harvest by fleeing or putting up passive resistance. "Peasant hatred of new ways, peasant conservatism, and peasant inertia," as well as outright sabotage—those were the real causes of any food shortages, Duranty insisted again and again.

As in his August dispatch, Duranty carefully avoided giving an absolute figure of famine losses. Earlier he had estimated that the normal death rate of 1 million in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the Lower Volga, taken together, had trebled, thus implying that the famine had killed 2 million people. Now he announced that this figure was too high for the North Caucasus and too low for Ukraine. But since he did not give a population figure for Ukraine or estimate its losses, we cannot tell what figure he had in mind. The conclusion presented to the readers of the *Times*, however, was clear: if there was a famine (Duranty's evidence on this point was highly ambiguous), it killed no more than 2 million people, and any such losses were entirely justified by the success of collectivization. A bit of suffering on the part of a few ignorant, anti-social kulaks had assured abundance for all.

In the remaining three articles in the series, Duranty resumed scoffing at the famine scare. "The writer has just completed a 200-mile auto trip through the heart of the Ukraine and can say positively that the harvest is splendid and all talk of famine now is ridiculous," he assured his readers on September 17, 1933.

"Summing up the impressions of a ten days' trip through North Caucasus and Ukraine, where this correspondent traveled with greater freedom and absence of supervision than had been expected, I repeat the opinion that the decisive engagement in the struggle for rural socialization has been won by the Kremlin," Duranty concluded on September 19. "The cost in some places has been heavy, but a generally excellent crop is already mitigating conditions to a marked extent."

Returning to Moscow, Duranty continued to gibe at the reports of famine. In mid-December the Soviet government announced that the state grain collections had been completed two-and-a-half months earlier than ever before. "This result," said Duranty,

> fully justifies the optimism expressed to the writer by local authorities during his September trip through the Ukraine and North Caucasus —optimism that contrasted so strikingly with the famine stories then current in Berlin, Riga, Vienna, and other places, where elements hostile to the Soviet Union were making an eleventh-hour attempt to avert American recognition by picturing the Soviet Union as a land of ruin and despair.

DURANTY's denials proved useful to Soviet spokesmen. When a group of Ukrainian women in the United States appealed to Congressman Herman Kopplemann of Connecticut to intervene with Moscow, Kopplemann forwarded their brief to Maxim Litvinov, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. "There is any amount of such pamphlets full of lies circulated by counterrevolutionary organizations abroad, who specialize in the work of this kind," Litvinov replied, not eloquently but clearly. "There is nothing left for them to do but to spread false information or to forge documents."

The Ukrainian memorandum had cited Duranty's August estimate of a trebled death rate. Boris Skvirsky, the counselor of the Soviet embassy in Washington, who was instructed by Litvinov to answer the Ukrainian charge in detail, found Duranty's later retraction of his estimate a handy rebuttal:

> The pamphlet does not add that in the *Times*, September 13, writing from Rostov-on-Don in the course of a personal inspection trip through those sections, Duranty stated that his estimate of July 24, before he had made his personal inspection, was exaggerated. He said that the poor harvest of 1932 had made for difficult conditions in certain sections, but there had been no famine. . . .

Kopplemann had second thoughts about the cause he had supported. Forwarding copies of Litvinov's and Skvirsky's replies to the Ukrainian women, he wrote:

> Because the facts contained in the pamphlet you submitted to me conflict to a large extent with the report from the Soviet officials, I am asking you to make further investigation of the charges you have presented to me.

STALIN appreciated Duranty's effort to make the news fit to print. "You have done a good job in your reporting of the USSR, although you are not a Marxist, because you tried to tell the truth about our country and to understand it and explain it to your readers," he told Duranty nine days after the latter filed his story of hostile elements making an eleventh-hour attempt to avert U.S. recognition.

More tangible expressions of Stalin's pleasure

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followed. Duranty triumphantly accompanied Litvinov to the United States in November 1933 when the latter came to negotiate diplomatic relations and on his return took with him in his dispatch case, as Alexander Woollcott of the *New Yorker* put it, the first American ambassador to Moscow. And late in the year, Duranty was granted an hour-long interview with the Great Helmsman himself. It was featured on the front page of the New York *Times* and summarized in other papers. "It is unusual for M. Stalin to give interviews with journalists," a Soviet specialist in the British Foreign Office commented dryly, "but W. Duranty might be expected to get favorable treatment in this respect."

American liberals were equally appreciative. George Seldes, author of *Freedom of the Press,* among other works, claimed that America would have nothing but objective and reliable news if all the editors chose correspondents of Duranty's caliber. The journalist Alvin Adey observed that "there is no American correspondent, or for that matter any other non-Russian writer on Soviet affairs, who surpasses Walter Duranty in knowledge and understanding of Russia." And Woollcott described the scene when United States recognition of the USSR was celebrated with a banquet at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York in late 1933 and the honor roll of those who had contributed most to the rapprochement was called:

> For each name in the roll, whether Russian or American, there was polite applause from the 1,700 [guests], but the one really prolonged pandemonium was evoked by the mention of a little Englishman who was an amused and politely attentive witness of these festivities. Indeed, one quite got the impression that America, in a spasm of discernment, was recognizing both Russia and Walter Duranty.

Another award for Duranty came from the *Nation,* which annually published an honor roll of citizens and institutions. In 1933 the honors went to the New York *Times* for printing and Walter Duranty for writing, during the previous decade and a half of Soviet rule, "the most enlightening, dispassionate, and readable dispatches from a great nation in the making which appeared in any newspaper in the world."

But Western correspondents who knew Duranty in Moscow did not share the regard in which he was held in New York. They called him Walter Obscuranty, and said that the impressions he conveyed privately did not even remotely resemble the impressions he purveyed to the readers of the *Times.*

Malcolm Muggeridge drew a devastating sketch of Duranty in his novel *Winter in Moscow* (the identifying tag is Duranty's egg-and-omelette line). In an article written in 1934 he also called Duranty's collected reporting from the Soviet Union an "essay in untruth":

> I shall never forget Mr. Duranty. There was something fantastic, fairy-like about the spectacle of him dancing his Roger de Coverly hand in hand with the Bolshevik bosses on a prostrate Russia. How jauntily the dance proceeded! What spirit in the steps and capers! And no confusion. No flagging. If, occasionally, a dancer withdrew, the figure did not suffer. Still a partner to bow to, still hands outstretched for a giddy twirl, still the dance going merrily on. . . . The remarkable thing is that Mr. Duranty has—to use one of his favorite expressions—"gotten away with it." Readers of the New York *Times* adore him; the Brain Trust and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat have lain down together, and Mr. Duranty has led them; his name is honored amongst the righteous in all parts of the world. In these circumstances, does not the dust-cover of *Russia Reported* show unusual moderation in describing the book as a "supreme triumph of modern reporting"?

Eugene Lyons's criticism was more specific. The blockade on news from Ukraine and the North Caucasus that lasted through the spring and summer of 1933, he recollected, was lifted in "easy stages":

> The first to be given permission to travel in the forbidden zones were the technically "friendly" reporters, whose dispatches might be counted upon to take the sting out of anything subsequent travelers might report. Duranty, for instance, was given a two weeks' advantage over most of us.
>
> On the day he returned, it happened, Billy [Lyons's wife] and I were dining with Anne O'Hare McCormick, roving correspondent for the New York *Times,* and her husband. Duranty joined us. He gave us his fresh impressions in brutally frank terms and they added up to a picture of ghastly horror. His estimate of the dead from famine was the most startling I had as yet heard from anyone.
>
> "But, Walter, you don't mean that literally?" Mrs. McCormick exclaimed.
>
> "Hell I don't. . . . I'm being conservative," he replied, and as if by way of consolation he added his famous truism: "But they're only Russians. . . ."
>
> Once more the same evening we heard Duranty make the same estimate, in answer to a question by Laurence Stallings, at the railroad station, just as the train was pulling out for the Polish frontier. When the issues of the *Times* carrying Duranty's own articles reached me I found that they failed to mention the large figures he had given freely and repeatedly to all of us.

Yet the most damning evidence against Duranty has never been presented. In a memorandum that he wrote for Muggeridge in December 1937 Lyons revealed the figure he had heard from Duranty:

> In *Assignment in Utopia,* I tell how Duranty, returning from a tour of inspection after the 1932-33 famine, told Anne O'Hare McCormick, myself, and others that the famine had

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killed many millions. His estimate, I say, was the largest I had yet heard. In the book I didn't mention the figure he used, but it was 7 million! Having passed on that figure to us in private conversation, he went home and wrote his famous dispatches pooh-poohing the famine.

Several days after his meeting with Lyons, Duranty gave the British chancery in Moscow an even more revealing account of his impressions in the North Caucasus and Ukraine. William Strang, the chargé d'affaires, summarized Duranty's findings for Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary, on September 26, 1933:

> According to Mr. Duranty, the population of the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga has decreased in the past year by 3 million, and the population of the Ukraine by 4-5 million. . . . From Rostov Mr. Duranty went to Kharkov, and on the way he noticed that large quantities of grain were in evidence at the railway stations, of which a large proportion was lying in the open air. Conditions in Kharkov were worse than in Rostov. There was less to eat, and the people had evidently been on very short commons. . . . Supervision over visitors was also stricter in Kharkov. During the year the death rate in Kharkov was, he thought, not more than 10 percent above the normal. Numerous peasants, however, who had come into the towns had died off like flies. . . . The Ukraine had been bled white. The population was exhausted. . . .
>
> At Kharkov Mr. Duranty saw the Polish consul, who told him the following story: A Communist friend employed in the Control Commission was surprised at not getting reports from a certain locality. He went out to see for himself, and on arrival he found the village completely deserted. Most of the houses were standing empty, while others contained only corpses. . . .
>
> Mr. Duranty thinks it quite possible that as many as 10 million people may have died directly or indirectly from lack of food in the Soviet Union during the past year.

Neither this figure nor the one he had cited to Lyons ever appeared in any of Duranty's articles or books.

This was not the end of the concealment.

According to the British Foreign Office, Duranty's companion on his trip to Ukraine and the North Caucasus was Stanley Richardson of the Associated Press. On September 22, Richardson cabled an astonishing dispatch.

Early in 1933, Moscow had thoroughly reorganized the Ukrainian party, purging and arresting many members, and established "political departments" at each state farm and machine-tractor station. Staffed by trusted urban workers and party members—at least a third of them Russians brought in from outside Ukraine—these political departments were given unlimited authority over the peasants and extensive powers over local Communists, many of whom had proven themselves too faint-hearted to carry out the party's murderous policies. As the head of the political departments throughout Ukraine and as one of the highest party officials in the republic, Alexander Asatkin was well placed to have an accurate picture of the destruction wreaked by the famine.

In his dispatch, Richardson reported that Asatkin, whom he had formally interviewed in Kharkov, had confirmed the famine and had even "estimated the percentage of deaths in his area last winter and spring from causes related to undernourishment." The censor in Moscow, however, had banned the transmission of Asatkin's figures on the grounds that they were not official. Although the *Times* carried other Associated Press dispatches from Moscow a few days before and a few days after the September 22 cable, it never published the report of Richardson's interview with Asatkin. A highly placed Communist official had confirmed the famine, and the *Times* had ignored the news. (And not only the *Times*. I have been able to find Richardson's dispatch in only three North American newspapers—the New York *American*, the Toronto *Star*, and the Toronto *Evening Telegram*.)

But even this was not the end of the concealment.

Harold Denny, who replaced Duranty as the *Times* correspondent in Moscow in April 1934, proved to be no more honest a reporter of the famine than his predecessor. On July 23, 1934, for example, Denny announced that "a winter of hunger and perhaps of actual famine has been averted in the great grain region of the Ukraine." The fair crop that was being expected, he fancied, would be "a victory for collectivized agriculture which will induce many remaining individual peasants to enter the fold."

Throughout 1933 and 1934 Ewald Ammende had been trying almost singlehandedly to draw public attention to the famine. A Baltic German, Ammende had briefly worked for the government of independent Estonia in 1919 and then moved to Western Europe, where he threw himself into relief work. In September 1933, when Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna established a famine relief committee (the members included the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, the head of the Lutheran church, and the leaders of other denominations in Vienna), Ammende became its General Secretary. In late June 1934, Ammende arrived in New York with a mission to obtain the support of churches and humanitarian organizations in the United States and Canada. In interviews and letters to editors Ammende announced that wide starvation was impending again and asked whether Western grain surpluses could not be used to bring relief to the starving districts in the Soviet Union.

In response to queries from his editors about Ammende's assertion, Denny visited Ukraine in July and again in October. Echoing the articles

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in which Duranty had attacked Jones, Denny claimed to have seen no signs of famine. "This correspondent is traveling through the principal grain regions to check reports published abroad that a new famine exists or impends," Denny cabled from Ukraine on October 7, 1934. "Thus far no famine has been found nor an indication of famine in the year to come, though many peasants must draw in their belts and eat food they do not like until the 1935 harvest."

Although peasants in southern Ukraine, by his own admission, told him that they were in "grave danger," Denny reported that he had feasted on "milk from contented collectivized cows and honey fresh from the hives of Bolshevik bees":

> These delicacies were served at the end of a meal of a tasty salad of tomatoes, pickles, and onions, roast duck, and fluffy potato souffle, much better prepared than in Moscow hotels, washed down with the Ukrainian national drink, slivyanka, a liquor made from plums, tasting non-alcoholic though with a mule's kick in every swallow.

Eight days later Denny again announced that he had found no signs of famine. He had deliberately sought, he said, "the sections where the worst conditions had been reported in the outside world and the localities that peasants on trains had told him were the most seriously affected." Despite all this searching, however, he had found no famine. "Nowhere even fear of it."*

"The hunt for famine in Russia," Denny concluded, borrowing a line from Duranty, "was like chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. It was always somewhere further on."

THUS the damage was done. The famine was a will-o'-the-wisp. Nazi and anti-Nazi, Right and Left, Stalinist and anti-Stalinist, would argue for years to come whether anything like a famine had happened at all, while the less polemically minded shuddered with distaste and turned to more substantial issues. My erudite editor justified silence on the grounds that the famine is little known. Another came to the same conclusion from the opposite starting point: the broad facts of the case, she opined, are so well known and so widely acknowledged that nothing more need be added. The Soviet press attaché in Ottawa displayed a touching like-mindedness. In whose interest is it to bring up an "alleged famine," he indignantly asked an interviewer, when East and West are facing so many unresolved problems?

These are only three examples. Their perceptions still shaped by Duranty's and Denny's lies, many otherwise well-informed people know only that Stalin did something nasty to the "kulaks" in the course of collectivization, and many assume that the peasants themselves were to blame. Two recent studies of mass murder are cases in point. Leo Kuper, in *Genocide*, argues that the liquidation of the kulaks was not genocide but only a "related atrocity," and devotes to the famine precisely half a sentence:

> Estimates of the numbers who perished range from 5 million to 15 million, and this is without taking into account the many millions of peasants starved to death in the artificially induced man-made famine of 1932-33.

Richard L. Rubenstein, in *The Age of Triage*, giving the matter just a bit more attention, manages to confuse the causes, chronology, and geography of the famine:

> Millions of peasants resisted [Stalin's collectivization] violently and killed their own livestock rather than permit them to become state property. A man-made famine, the first of a series, ensued which compelled Stalin to retreat temporarily. Nevertheless, by 1932 he had broken the back of his country's peasantry.

The famine of 1933 was one of the greatest crimes of the 20th century. Yet it has been met in most quarters with an indifference bordering on cynicism and in some with a conspiracy of silence (this proverbial phrase was first applied to the famine of 1933) that is nothing short of criminal. In an age when "genocide" and "holocaust" have become a part of every journalist's lexicon, the horrors of 1933 in Ukraine are still dismissed as recondite, are still being made fit to print. Orwell had it right:

> The fog of lies and misinformation that surrounds such subjects as the Ukraine famine, the Spanish civil war, Russian policy in Poland, and so forth, is not due entirely to conscious dishonesty, but any writer or journalist who is fully sympathetic to the USSR—sympathetic, that is, in the way the Russians themselves would want him to be—does have to acquiesce in deliberate falsification on important issues.

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* Such denials were as convenient for Soviet apologists as Duranty's had been. When William Randolph Hearst mounted a campaign against Roosevelt's Soviet policy in 1935 and ordered his editors to reprint eyewitness accounts of the famine that had appeared in 1933, the American Communist party attacked Hearst by citing Denny's finding that there was no famine anywhere.

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The Last Great Yiddish Poet?

Ruth R. Wisse

A country or a state should endure longer than an individual. At least this seems to be in keeping with the order of things. Today, however, one is constantly running across survivors of various Atlantises. Their lands in the course of time are transformed in memory and take on outlines that are no longer verifiable.

WHOMEVER Czeslaw Milosz may have had in mind in making this observation, it certainly holds true for his compatriot and friend, the Yiddish poet Abraham Sutzkever, a survivor of the same Lithuanian Atlantis (though of a very different sector) as Milosz himself. Sutzkever, two years the younger, grew up in the Lithuanian capital of Vilna between the world wars and survived the destruction of its Jewish ghetto in 1943. His own image for the watery grave of his lost Atlantis is that of a green aquarium, where all the people of his former life swim in perpetual fluid music. One can at any time observe this land that has been transformed into memory, and even place one's lips against the glass, but any attempt to penetrate or repossess the past will shatter the fragile remains.

Although Sutzkever is not yet fully accessible to the English-reading public, he has long been renowned among his fellow poets and among educated Jewish readers. This year the National Library in Jerusalem will mount an exhibition devoted to his life and work, and will issue one of several commemorative publications in honor of his seventieth birthday. Sutzkever's biography is so intricately intertwined with the major events of Jewish history that he has often been accorded semi-legendary status as a 20th-century Jewish pilgrim. He also plays a pivotal role in the development of contemporary Yiddish belles-lettres, since for thirty-five years he has been the editor of *Di goldene keyt* ("The Golden Chain"), the most prestigious Yiddish journal in the world.

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Sutzkever himself has offered a wry comment on his own survival, when so many others have perished. He tells the story of Moyshe Itzke, the oddest of the writers and artists in Vilna during the 1930's. This young man used to be confined to a mental hospital for several months of the year, and bursting with creative energy the rest of the time. One day he came to Sutzkever with the news that he was immortal. Sutzkever, trying to deal reasonably with a madman, pointed out that of the three men Moyshe Itzke most admired—Dostoevsky, Napoleon, and Moses—Dostoevsky managed to cheat death but once, Napoleon died in shameful exile, and Moses was not even accorded entry into the promised land. Moyshe Itzke was stumped for only a moment before he replied, "Well, someone's got to break through!" By this order of desperate madness must the survival of an individual Vilna Jew be judged.

Sutzkever's remarkable productivity during and since World War II may of course be seen as a sign of Jewish national regeneration: he has written several major poems on the subject. But this is only the shallowest level of his work. From his beginnings as an artist, Sutzkever was fascinated by the regenerative powers of poetry—another threatened species of our time. Indeed, one can think of few modern poets prepared to make so great a claim for their craft. In sharp contrast to those for whom silence is the appropriate human response to the barbarism we have borne in our century, Sutzkever has identified poetry as the reliable counterforce to all that destroys. Particularly during the Holocaust, when every known moral scruple was crushed beyond recognition, the reality of a good poem remained beyond anyone's destructive perversity. In a private reckoning Sutzkever has even attributed his very life to his literary faith: "As if the Angel of Poetry had confided to me: 'The choice lies in your hands. If your poem inspires me, I will protect you with a flaming sword. If not—don't complain. My conscience will be clean.' "

No one but Sutzkever is empowered to judge whether his survival is due to the saving grace of poetry, but certain facts of his biography are beyond dispute. After the liquidation of the ghetto in September 1943, Sutzkever, then a member of a

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partisan unit in the Narotsh Forest outside Vilna, was flown to Moscow by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of the Soviet Union as a symbol of resistance to Nazism. Ilya Ehrenburg, one of wartime Russia's most influential writers, published an article about Sutzkever in *Pravda* that brought the poet thousands of letters from readers throughout the country who found in it assurance that something of Jewish value, of human value, had been salvaged. On the strength of his reputation as a poet, Sutzkever was chosen to testify as witness for Russian Jewry at the Nuremberg trials after the war (Vilna having been absorbed by the Soviet Union). He received a decoration from Stalin, and while neither this nor the deposition of evidence at Nuremberg could give him much satisfaction, he was able to use his position of honor during his two years in Russia to bring tangible aid to many individuals who in turn attribute their survival to his.

The power of art cannot ultimately be proved by its practical effects, but it is worth knowing about a poet who believes that poetry saves lives. What would the suicide web of modern American poets make of such a notion?

SUTZKEVER was the son of two happily-paired descendants of the Lithuanian Jewish intellectual aristocracy who settled down after their marriage in Smorgon, near Vilna, and had three children, the youngest, Abraham, in the summer of 1913. His mother was the daughter of the Mikhalishok rabbi, with a many-branched genealogy of scholars; his father, who had inherited a leather factory, preferred to spend his time studying and teaching. The sudden outbreak of war forced the family to flee, seeking refuge in Omsk, in southwestern Siberia. When his father died there in 1922, Sutzkever's widowed mother returned with her children to Vilna, now part of the newly formed Polish state.

Jewish Vilna between the wars was a community of some 65,000, about a third of the city's total population. Vilna's economic stagnation prompted Milosz to describe it as Europe's "other side of the tracks"; Jewish advancement throughout the new Polish state was further curtailed by restrictive nationalist policies. Perhaps by way of partial compensation for their political and economic disabilities, Jews were feverishly active in their own social and cultural spheres. Sutzkever was educated and influenced by many new institutions that were created to adapt traditional Jewish patterns to the demands of the secular atmosphere: he attended a Hebrew-Polish high school; became a member of the Jewish Scouts; read independently at the public Jewish Strashun Library; later studied old Yiddish poetry at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research that was founded in Vilna in 1926 as a center of research and scholarship. To satisfy his maturing interest in literature, he also sat in on classes at the university, and learned Russian in order to read Pushkin. He began writing poetry as a teenager; his first poem was published in the Scouts' magazine.

The 1930's were the most intensely political years of Yiddish culture, nowhere more so than in Poland. Sutzkever's friends tried to draw him into their political activities—on one side the Socialist Territorialists, who sought for Yiddish a key role in autonomous Jewish lands which, they proposed, should be established wherever Jews were concentrated in sufficient numbers; on another side the larger group of Soviet sympathizers. Vilna's most beloved Yiddish poet, Moishe Kulbak, had set the tone by moving to the Soviet city of Minsk in 1928. While the Communist party was outlawed in Poland, it represented for many young Jewish intellectuals the obvious alternative to the poverty and anti-Semitism that were their lot under nationalist Polish rule.

The local artistic and literary coterie, *Yung Vilna*, of which Sutzkever aspired to be a member, was outspokenly political in its public voice. Most of its affiliated writers happened to be neighbors and friends of the young poet, but they did not want to accept him because of the esoteric quality of his verse. Shmerke Kaczerginski, a young firebrand who was admitted into the group about the time that Sutzkever was refused, later regretted his attitude yet recalled its logic: "I was then busy hanging red flags on telegraph wires, hurling proclamations at military installations, calling fathers, mothers, and children to the barricades," he wrote, echoing phrases from his poetry of the period, poetry that was set to music and widely sung. He had tried to persuade Sutzkever that the times were of pure steel not crystal (*loyter shtol un nisht krishtol*), demanding of the artist a commensurately hard grasp of reality.

In this atmosphere of cultural activism Sutzkever came on the scene as the sunniest wordsmith, delighting in the formation of new Yiddish words and in the redemption of old ones, surprising the language with untried rhymes and verbal effects. Between man and nature he always aligned himself with nature, his model of fecundity and goad to his own inventiveness. His lack of concern with politics was not the product of any personal ideological position but rather the result of a romantic temperament and of a concentration on art that left no room for temporal distraction. It does seem, however, that he conceived of poetry from the very outset as an antidote to history, not the midwife his fellow artists would have made of it. Poetry alone, for Sutzkever, possessed the imaginative capacity to resist the forces of death and the pressures of daily care that would blacken human joy.

Sutzkever found the source of poetry in his childhood, or rather in his myth of childhood, which

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he developed in a cycle of poems about his early years in Siberia that he began writing in 1935. By any objective standard those years had been grim. For the refined young couple with their three small children the several-thousand-kilometer trek from their home in Smorgon to unknown Omsk in Siberia must have been the start of a frightening exile. In fact, exile had been the founding condition of the Jewish community of Omsk, whose first settlers were the Jewish children seized for military service in the reign of Czar Nicholas I and transported to a region far enough from home to discourage all thought of return. Some of these cantonists, as they were called, had been joined by other Jewish refugees later in the century and established in Omsk a few synagogues and schools. It was perhaps in one of them that Abraham Sutzkever had begun to study when he was five.

The family had lived in hardship. The father, in failing health, gave lessons in Talmud to sons of local merchants while his own children helped the traders in the market. The whole family had fallen ill of typhus apparently as the result of Abraham's investigation of a dead soldier in the snow. The local economy had deteriorated during the anarchy that followed the October Revolution, when Omsk was for a time part of the territory that resisted Bolshevik rule. When the father died (in 1922), and the family returned home, their Siberian legacy lingered on: the intense frost that had afflicted Sutzkever's sister with inflammation of the brain was responsible for her death at the age of fourteen, three years later.

Of this unhappy stuff, and at a long remove from the bare facts, Sutzkever spun a splendid story of his birth as a poet. Siberia he considered to be the origin of all the beauty of the world, a treasure dome like Kubla Khan's, of sharply engraved sound and sensation, a frozen Eden:

Sunset over icy blue roads
Colors suffuse my mood. A little hut
Shines across the way in the valley,
Covered with a flurry of sunset.
Amazing forests sway against the panes;
Magic sleighs go ringing by.
Doves coo in the attic, coo my face
Out of its shell. Beneath the ice,
Striped with flashes of lightning crystals,
The Irtish ripples as if it were not real.
And there, under hushed cupolas,
A seven year old child—a world—grows tall.
(Translated by Chana Bloch)

The rest of the long poem "Siberia," of which this is the opening stanza, shows the poet hatched in his landscape of wonder, as fully formed in his seventh year, and as untried, as God's own world on the seventh day of creation. He revels in the discovery of bears, wolves, doves, and Kirghizian camel drivers with whom he shares the timeless, endless steppe; and he in turn, in his suit of skin, is the plaything of nature, the little snowman of the bright North Star.

Of all his earthly relatives, Sutzkever included in this little epic only his father, who is described slicing black bread with a merciful knife, taking his young child out to the forest to chop firewood, and playing the fiddle so vibrantly by moonlight that a wolf is drawn to the window "to sniff at the flesh of the music." The illustrations by Marc Chagall that accompany the text in the English, Hebrew, and Yiddish editions of this work remind the reader, somewhat shockingly, how much of a Jew the father was, in his black caftan and beard; in the poem there is nothing to suggest Jewish custom, least of all the father's death—an exchange of one small hut above the earth for a smaller one beneath it. The boy considers following his parent to his new home, and is only lured back to life by the competing brilliance of the evening sun.

As Sutzkever presents it in this poem, and in many another, Siberia is the uncharted region where the poet, like the child before him, begins life as a pagan, moved to awe by each successive manifestation of nature (rather than by nature's God). Siberia allows for the confessional joy of the spirit while it is still free to burst with sensation, before it is claimed by civilization. The poems of Siberia, representing the experience of a seven-year-old, do not have to take into account community or causality; they are pre-Jewish, presocietal, the work of Abram before he becomes the patriarch Abraham. The myth of what Sutzkever calls his "blond beginning" permits the poet to enjoy the raw excitement of the created world without having either to acknowledge or, more significantly, to repudiate any of the historical or cultural constraints that ought to have bound him as a Jew.

There is nothing in modern Jewish literature quite as free as Sutzkever's exploration of Siberia. True, Yiddish and Hebrew fiction from the mid-19th century on is filled with images of boys who find in nature—in a summer storm, a neighbor's garden, the rush of a river, a frolicking calf—escape from the confinement of parental expectations, but their love of beauty and play soon comes into conflict with the controlling impulses of the culture. In this body of writing, adults typically insist on moral self-perfection to the exclusion of everything else, especially the life of art. In a story by Sholem Aleichem, for example, a father tries to prevent his son from playing the violin because he should be devoting himself to study. When the father learns that his son has disobeyed, he suffers a stroke; the boy capitulates to the ban. In the legend Sutzkever spins, by contrast, the scholarly father is himself revealed as an inspired Jewish fiddler, who bequeathes to his

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son a legacy of divine service through music. In this way the transition from generation to generation, instead of being fraught with conflict, is made to appear seamless, innocent of rebellion, so natural that one does not even notice that the father's religion has disappeared, and art has taken its place.

Obviously, then, the attempts of Sutzkever's colleagues in *Yung Vilna* to sharpen his social awareness were doomed to fail; for him, the very function of a poem was not to present or to protest meanness, but to subvert it. He seems, moreover, never to have doubted his own abilities along these lines, and his faith was vindicated when the group called the Introspectivists accepted several of his poems and invited him to become a regular contributor to their magazine in New York. On the strength of this endorsement from overseas, the Warsaw Yiddish PEN Club put out Sutzkever's maiden volume, *Lider* (in 1937, two years after it published the first novel of Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Satan in Goray*).

Still, recognition of Sutzkever's talent did not imply recognition of the direction it took, and until the outbreak of the war he was considered an anomaly in the general atmosphere of literary engagement. When the Red Army took Vilna in 1939, Sutzkever was in the process of preparing a modern verse rendition of the 16th-century Yiddish classic, the *Bovo Bukh*, an adventure poem of courtly love and prowess. He regretted that the crashing thunder was drowning out the sounds of his harp.

THEN, in 1941, came the German invasion and with it the incarceration of Vilna's Jews in the ghetto. Everyone who had known and read the young Sutzkever marveled at the unexpected stamina he showed during the following years. The "Ariel" of Yiddish literature, as he was known, became an important cultural presence in the ghetto and an active member of the underground. Sutzkever's colleague Chaim Grade, the poet and (later) short-story writer and novelist, escaped with the retreating Red Army when the Germans invaded, and spent the war in Russia; he spoke later of the cunning of providence that had placed Sutzkever in hell just to see whether he, chief celebrant of nature's festive harmony, could not be crushed. Grade wrote this in salute to the double miracle of Sutzkever's physical survival and his ability to maintain his artistic balance,

From our present vantage point we may see things a little differently. If it were possible at all to maintain artistic balance under ghetto conditions, Sutzkever would have had the advantage over his colleagues, since his art had never been subject to "temporal" definition. For those writers who believed solely, or even largely, in the material basis of life and literature, the humiliating changes imposed on the Jews under German occupation required a total reconsideration of the human state, a reconsideration made more difficult by the occupiers' policy of confounding in order more easily to destroy their victims. Sutzkever's vision of a metaphysical harmony that subsumes human life within a much wider embracing arc helped to shield him from the degradation, even if it could not fully protect him from the danger of German whim. Because poetry, for him, had always been an inspired partnership with the creative impulses of nature, it continued even under the Nazis to remain immune to political dictation, to become in fact a demonstrative repudiation of such dictation.

Sutzkever resisted in both word and deed. For over a year he worked at the headquarters of Alfred Rosenberg, promulgator of the Nuremberg Laws, who had come to Vilna to destroy, along with vestiges of the Jews, the last traces of their culture. Under orders to pack Jewish books and cultural treasures for shipment to Germany, Sutzkever organized his colleagues to smuggle out the most valuable manuscripts and even pieces of sculpture for buried safekeeping and eventual retrieval. This work was extended to the smuggling of arms from the Aryan side into the ghetto soon after the Jewish resistance was formed in January 1942.

Under circumstances that remain unimaginable even when they have been documented, Sutzkever also continued to write verse and to organize cultural evenings that did much to sustain communal morale. In the diary of one ghetto inmate we find the following entry:

> In the presence of fifteen of the most respected writers and artists Sutzkever read his new poem, *Dos keyver-kind* ["The Grave-child"]. . . . This dramatic chronicle contains a good deal of visionary lyricism. After the author had read his poem there was a very long period of silence before anyone spoke. The immediacy of these dramatized events, the form of the composition and its greatness, had the effect of closing everyone's lips. Only after the first speaker managed to break the silence did a discussion begin that continued for three hours. I think that this was the first ghetto evening of exalted creative inspiration.

The poem that had its premiere that evening won the ghetto's literary prize for 1942.

A recurring subject of Sutzkever's ghetto poetry is the expression of individual dignity in small but meaningful acts:

> Because he wanted to smuggle a flower through the ghetto's gate
> my neighbor paid the price of seven lashes.
> How precious it is to him now—this blue
> vernal flower and its golden pupil!
> My neighbor bears the mementos with no regrets:

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spring breathes through and colors his tortured
flesh—
that's how much he wanted it to flourish.
(Translated by Seymour Mayne)

Since death has taken the place of life as the normal condition of the ghetto, every link established with nature becomes proof of one's right to exist as a part of it. The neighbor's martyrdom elevates both flower and spring to a sanctified status they would not otherwise achieve. A flower simply flourishes; only man can determine its value and thereby affirm his own.

All the splendor of creation that Sutzkever celebrated before the war contracted during the ghetto years into tiny reminders of nature's resourcefulness and resilience. In unlikely signs, such as a warming mound of horse manure or the reflection of moonlight on a sliver of glass, nature sends the poet the conspiratorial message that it will not finally be dominated by these human conquerors, no matter how thorough their destructive sweep.

One puzzling feature of Sutzkever's writing during the war is its formal regularity. Some readers, expecting a breakdown of structure due to the pressure of the subject, have expressed surprise at the recurring inclination to classical meter and perfect rhyme. The poems clench themselves tightly, insistent on closures, pitted by their elegance against all that would grind them into formless oblivion. The same *play* with language is also irrepressible here. Sutzkever is a master of rhyme, linking apparently disparate features of language in a show of wit, forging unity where none has been evident. It often seems as if he were marshaling the formal grace of poetry against the surrounding rot, using rhyme above all, the tiny man-made miracles of pairing, as a barrier against chaos.

Not survival but resistance is the theme of Sutzkever's ghetto poems. Hiding in a coffin during a roundup of ablebodied Jews, he writes a poem to his dead sister, long since resident in a coffin, and by so doing momentarily proves his victory over the "wooden clothes" in which he has been made to lie. Left bleeding by sadistic storm troopers in a ditch of lime, he reinvents the spectacle of red flowing into white as a sunset, and one of his own making.

One begins to understand how Sutzkever transmitted such a sense of strength during the war, and how he maintained it himself. Encasing the man within the poet, he became virtually indestructible, the way a poem, vulnerable during the capricious process of its creation, becomes obdurate and intractable once finished. Sutzkever's "I" gradually assumed an impersonal quality; the struggle his poetry records was not the flailing motion of a man trying to keep himself alive but the struggle of the artist to surmount earthly constraints and remain intent on the moral order of beauty. Indeed, in this attempt at hard self-control something personal was inevitably forfeited. Sutzkever suppressed the worst aspects of his experience, and with this, remarkably, some of the strongest poems he wrote while in the ghetto. Until very recently he kept hidden (he says he forgot) certain poems that deal with incidents of great shame, reluctant to admit into his finished work the defeat that his poetry hoped to deny.

It is paradoxical that a prose history, *Of the Vilna Ghetto*, written by Sutzkever immediately after the war in order to record as many details as he could recall and corroborate, should contain more spontaneous expressions of his mood and thought than the lyrics dealing with some of the very same experiences. Like so many of his fellow survivors, he was obsessed by his duty to keep the record, in order to help prosecute the criminals and—perhaps even more important—to pay tribute to the brave. But while a witness may swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth—swear, that is, to limit himself to empirical data—as a poet Sutzkever was dissatisfied with the sort of evidence that would do no more than confirm the annihilation of his world.

Sutzkever realized, while still in the ghetto, that unless he were exceedingly cautious, the angle of vision granted him as a Jew would make him an intolerable witness. He was faced with perpetual evidence of Jewish degradation, and almost never with its source in German abominations. The strategists of evil made only occasional forays into their dominion: it was the changing face of the victims that one saw, and whoever became the recorder of this damage was in danger of providing exhibits for the postwar museum of Jewish degeneracy that Hitler intended to build.

Apart from his book on the Vilna ghetto and his testimony at Nuremberg, Sutzkever has refrained from speaking in public about the events that oppress him most; to this day he grants no interviews. Whatever can be transmuted into poetry is gradually exposed. For the rest he points to an impossible imbalance in the effort to communicate the reduction of human value to those who did not know it on their flesh.

It was Sutzkever's fate to survive a second Jewish catastrophe after he was brought to Moscow in 1944. Between the German invasion of Russia in June 1941 and the end of the war, the Jews of the Soviet Union (as opposed to those under Nazi rule) enjoyed a relative normalcy; that is, they suffered only the terrible hardship of their Russian countrymen without accumulated Jewish disabilities. During this interval the Soviet Yiddish writers and artists gathered in the officially-sanctioned Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee brought Sutzkever to Moscow as a part of their rescue effort. The knowledge

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that Jews and Russians were now facing a common enemy made it permissible for Jewish writers to express a national purpose—something they had been forbidden to do for a decade—and Yiddish culture, which had been stifled in the Soviet Union, experienced a brief revival.

In Moscow Sutzkever befriended many Russian writers, including Boris Pasternak who translated several of his poems. He was deeply affected by his encounters with the major figures of Soviet Yiddish culture—the actor-director Shloime Mikhoels, the poets Peretz Markish and Dovid Hofstein, the novelist Dovid Bergelson—all of whom were trying under precarious conditions to resume an active creative life. In 1948, the worst fears of these men were realized when Mikhoels was murdered, at the order of Stalin, in a staged accident. Shortly afterward all the leading Jewish intellectuals and artists were arrested and imprisoned until their execution in August 1952. As a Polish refugee, Sutzkever had the good fortune to be repatriated in 1946, going first to Lodz and from there, in early 1947, to Paris. He thus became the poignant witness to the loss of a second "Atlantis," whose inhabitants continue to people his work.

Before leaving Poland, Sutzkever managed to complete, under Communist threat, the rescue of Jewish cultural treasures he had undertaken under the Nazis. He unearthed the materials buried during the war and had them smuggled out of Russia, at great risk, to New York City, where they constitute the Sutzkever-Kaczerginski Collection of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. As the historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz has pointed out, this collection includes material that had not existed when the YIVO flourished in Vilna: Sutzkever and Kaczerginski gathered an extraordinary archive of documents in the ghetto itself that was transferred clandestinely to New York along with the older salvaged books and manuscripts.

Sutzkever spent half a year in Paris, a postwar meeting point of survivors. But then unlike the majority of Yiddish writers who preferred to stay on in Europe or move to America, he went to Palestine. He arrived as part of the illegal immigration of 1947 and in the same year that the state of Israel was created he founded the Yiddish journal named appropriately *The Golden Chain*, emblem of Jewish continuity. His establishment in Israel of the most carefully edited of all Yiddish literary publications helped to initiate a change in the country's linguistic politics, gaining recognition for Yiddish where it had been, at best, grudgingly tolerated, and in turn winning recognition for Israel as a center of Yiddish high culture.

There is a certain parallel between Sutzkever's invention of himself as child of the Siberian steppe and his avid exploration of the Israeli desert soon after his arrival in the country. In the vastness of the Negev and the Sinai he found something akin to the stretches of Siberia, space where a solitary observer could once again take his bearings in the scheme of things. The landscape might no longer elicit the joys of virgin discovery, but the lasting imprints of the past that one found everywhere in the desert gave solace to a survivor of lost civilizations:

The sunset grew bold: it insisted on staying
In the Red Sea at night, when the innocent pink
Young fauns delicately make their way
Downhill to the palace of water to drink.

They leave their silken shadows on the shore,
Bending to lick the rings of coolness
In the Red Sea, with long fiddle-faces. And there
They are betrothed at last to the silence.

And then—they run away. Rosy flecks
Animate the sand. But the sunset deer
Stay behind in the water, mournful, and lick
The silence of those that are no longer there.
(Translated by Chana Bloch)

This lyric, "Deer at the Red Sea," consecrates a moment of rare natural beauty, rendered in words of innocence, delicacy, refinement. Like enchanted fairy-tale princesses who unite only fleetingly with their lovers, the deer, a gentle tribe, suddenly vanish, leaving only their haunting reflection. The romance of this poem begins in material substance, fauns coming to quench their thirst in the lingering evening, and ends in metaphysics, the attachment of sound to echo, of all that is temporarily manifest in life to all that is thereafter absent. Yet mourners who have absorbed a vanished presence may continue to draw sustenance from it long after its physical disappearance. Much in the same way, this poem keeps alive its subject, no longer there in the flesh. Sutzkever's absolute faith in poetry as a timeless proving of earthly existence generates strong hints of a God who is no longer present within His created world. But mournful creatures, graced by His image—poets especially—lap at the silence His absence has left.

BEGINNING in the mid 1950's Sutzkever traveled to all parts of the globe. As the guest of major Jewish communities in Australia, Africa, South and North America, and Europe, he knew how to inspire in his audience faith in their ability to bear the burden of their past. On the podium he developed the public style we associate with Russian and Polish poets who generate in their listeners a mighty sense of common destiny. His readings turned into dramatic community manifestations.

His private travels also rekindled a native curiosity about the rich variety of animal and vegetable life. On an extended trip to Africa a decade after the war, Sutzkever responded to the exoticism of the strange new continent, exploring

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desert and jungle, tracking elephants, visiting with the king of the Zulus. In the poetry that followed, his own past was refracted in new images—lepers, caged tigers, a plague of termites, a sweep of locust, a pygmy-dance, the monkey-merchant. Sutzkever took in all the strangeness and beauty and some of the brutality of Africa with a sense of familiarity, recognizing in creatures he had never before seen the instinctual faculties he had come to appreciate through his own experience. He showed affection especially for the majesty of the jungle which is all the more vulnerable for being so awesome.

Twice, in 1948 and in 1961, Sutzkever deviated from the lyrical forms in which he remains most comfortable to create national epics of ambitious narrative scope. *Geheymshtot* ("Secret City") records the effort of ten Jews, a symbolic *minyan* of men and women and a newborn infant, to escape the destruction of Vilna by hiding in the sewers beneath it. *Gaystike erd* ("Spiritual Soil") dramatizes the journey of refugees from Europe to Palestine aboard the ship *Patria* in September 1947, and the efforts of this saving remnant to resettle the country under Arab attack. In each work Sutzkever was drawing from his own experience: the sewer had been his escape route when the ghetto was liquidated; he came to Palestine, much as he describes the journey's details, aboard the *Patria*. Yet despite the authenticity of the information, the epics are obviously the projections of a single narrator who is determined to make history respond to his affirmative will. The suppleness of the Yiddish original, which owes much to the colloquial play of language, stiffens in English, and no effective translations of these works in their entirety have yet proved possible.

SUTZKEVER'S true *magnum opus* appears to be a sustained work of quite another kind, the series of *Poems from a Diary* that he has been writing since 1974. As one might expect of a diary, the entries are filled with casual disclosures about quotidian affairs, "a funeral by day and a concert at night," and fragments of dream and memory. Given the interests of the diarist there is also a good deal of personal reflection about speech, poetry, life and death. Through the apparent randomness of these poems, Sutzkever's personality emerges more forcefully than in any previous work, and he seems to have found here the perfect vehicle for his characteristic mixture of passion and intelligence, a tension between mood and mind that has reminded one critic of the English metaphysical poets, though a closer parallel might be John Berryman's *Dream Songs*, which also depend for their full appreciation on some familiarity with their author's life.

Poems from a Diary opens with the observation, "Distance nears." A man advanced in years feels the past crowding in on him, but the provocative oxymoron also points forward, to the approach of endlessness, perhaps eternal life. Our vision, like our eyesight, alters as we age; it is typical of Sutzkever to collapse the languages of space and time, giving substantiality to the ephemeral by treating time as a function of space. Death, the ugliest breach of time, only poetry has the human power to heal.

By now death is an old familiar for Sutzkever, and he treats it here with a playfulness that seems to have passed beyond tragedy to its farther comic side. The speaker of these poems is no longer a scarred survivor, but nature's intimate, a somewhat bemused authority:

Who will last? And what? The wind will stay,
and the blind man's blindness when he's gone
away,
and a thread of foam—a sign of the sea—
and a bit of cloud snarled in a tree.

Who will last? And what? A word as green
as Genesis, making grasses grow.
And what the prideful rose might mean,
seven of those grasses know.

Of all that northflung starry stuff,
the star descended in the tear will last.
In its jar, a drop of wine stands fast.
Who lasts? God abides, isn't it enough?
(Translated by Cynthia Ozick)

No single poem can suggest the range of wit and grace of the entire cycle, but this lyric does touch the center of its search. Man, riddled with unanswered questions, is in danger of becoming a cynic or a nihilist: one who accepts and perhaps even enjoys the impermanence of things, the absence of any essential reality. Against this fatal undertow Sutzkever's ripe poetry ranges its every resource. The affirmation here is far from thunderous, to be sure. It seems rather mischievous to locate permanence in wind and foam; and the second stanza, reducing poetry to a language of grass and flowers, takes us all the way back to a prehistoric landscape and forces us to confront the possibility of having to begin there again. The proofs of eternity that are found in a drop of pain and a droplet of wine are a far cry from the glory that inspired the biblical psalmist, with *his* knowledge of God. Alongside all this, the rhetorical question that ends the poem leaves itself open to a skeptical rejoinder.

And yet, the poem does point us in the direction of an essence underlying mere existence. For all its minimalism and informality, it combines with others in this series to form a kind of modern psalter, recognizing God in the remnants of His creation. While the context is not particularly "Jewish," Sutzkever attributes to poetry much of the flavor of Judaism, with its struggle to discipline lawlessness, its dogged or exuberant attachment to life. Life, not to be mistaken for the road to happiness, he defines as the inevitable

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coupling of pain and joy, with the possibility of one utterly dependent on the presence of the other. The decomposition of Sutzkever's family and community, the rapid decline of his native language, have "fragmented" his culture quite literally; all the more reason to make each fragment yield the sensation of the whole to which it once organically adhered.

As PERHAPS the last great Yiddish poet, Sutzkever faces one additional problem of his own creation. He alludes to it in a diary-poem dated 1981 in which a woman at an adjoining table in a café points out the scribbling poet to her young son with the words: "That's not a man, but a legend." He turns this phrase over in his mind, but then, impatient with its dull abstraction, feels the impulse to bite his own writing hand, to get a taste of the legend. If life-threatening deflation is one of this poet's oldest concerns, in his recent work he is no less aware of the danger of inflation. Words that soar too high are suspect and deadly, even when filled with noble intention; they take you beyond life. In the lyrics of his sixties Sutzkever hence inevitably lacks some of the heroic conviction that inspired the struggle of his middle years. But there is still great excitement of observation, and deepening love for the life that feels itself simultaneously lengthening and shortening.

The phoenix quality of Abraham Sutzkever's witness to his lost Atlantis cannot fail to provide a source of inspiration to anyone who ever doubted the mysterious creative continuity of vanished East European Jewry. If in Sutzkever's judgment it would be a shame to reduce him to legend, his poetry generates a faith in itself, in its own true vivifying power, that lends an aura of indestructibility to the destroyed world it stubbornly mourns and celebrates.

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Writer at Work

A Story

Jeffrey Miller

For Cynthia Ozick

EVERY WRITER dreams of publishing a story in the *Monocle*, and the Mouse was no exception. She was called the Mouse by two editors and a literary agent who had discovered that common to them were certain visits by the young woman during the second week of April 1979. She had sent cards first, of course, a watercolor of an applecart in an open field, announcing in longhand her intended visit to New York, and despite mildly discouraging replies, arrived, politely insistent, manuscripts in hand, a tiny, bony thing in pleated gray tweed that reached her gray-stockinged calves—a literary mouse not only in appearance, but because, as the editors knew from reading her fiction (which they never bought), she was an expositor of one theme only, a clutcher of one topic, which she would occasionally nibble at and worry (jealously, nervously, as her covering letters betrayed) . . . *viz.*, The Role of Women in Jewish-American Literature. "SJF, lonely, literary," as her favorite tabloid might capsulize it.

The Mouse's name was Claudia Bemel. She told the editors that she just wanted to meet the people she had been corresponding with all these years. To the agent she brought a story she wanted to sell, preferably to the *Monocle*, preferably—since she was an occasional contributor to a Toronto women's quarterly and therefore arguably a published author—without his levying a reading fee. A self-proclaimed soft touch, the agent capitulated, saying that he would read the story, but for anything else, they would see.

The story was called "Logos" and was about a Jewish law professor who had made a religion of the so-called Socratic method of teaching. His pedantic delight was to lay a proposition at the feet of a student only to pull it out from under him, assiduously to meet any question with a question of his own, to deflect all challenge back at its proponent. In thirty-three years of teaching not once had the professor answered a question.

JEFFREY MILLER, a new contributor, has written reviews and essays for a number of Canadian journals. He is currently at work on a novel.

This dedication made him unpopular not only with many students, but also with his colleagues, who took his old methods as a derogation of their more modern expository ones, an implication that they were lazy and lax. Many said he was the most arrogant man in the profession. Like his classical role-model, he was compelled into an early retirement and thus an untimely death.

On the subject of her professor's arrogance, the Mouse had written into the story a joke that was then current, saying that it was the professor's favorite. *Q. What are the three things that prove Jesus was Jewish? A. He lived at home until he was thirty, went into his father's business, and his mother thought he was God.* On reading this, Farb-Rothman, the agent, laughed, but it touched a nerve: he himself had lived alone with his mother from the time his father died, when he was twelve, until she herself passed away when he was thirty-seven. He had never married.

The joke amused the professor, the Mouse said, for two reasons: all his adult life he refused to affirm or deny the existence of any god, Jewish, Christian, or otherwise. Two, he subscribed to the view that Jewish women were all latent Mrs. Portnoys—smotherers, manipulators; to his bed he took only *shiksehs*.

Yet when he died the professor discovered to his surprise that the soul survived the body. Uncharacteristically, he felt fear: what if there was in fact a God Whom he had not embraced? But his fears were overcome for a time by the realization that he could spend all eternity in discourse with history's greatest legal minds.

First, he approached Moses. But, as everybody knows, in the world to come Moses speaks Yiddish on weekdays, and Hebrew on the Sabbath—the professor could speak neither, lousy Jew that he was. Disappointed, he wondered what kind of afterlife this was in which linguistic distinctions were maintained. He tried again, Confucius this time. But like Moses, the great philosopher could not make out what the professor wanted. So, the professor cast despairingly about for a friendlier face and at last recognized, from his famous satyr's aspect, his very mentor. His heart leapt. But the professor, though learned, had no Greek.

As he turned abjectly from Socrates, suddenly it

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dawned on him that this was to be his punishment for not accepting God as the foundation of human order—hadn't Socrates pleaded as much at his trial? For him, Heaven was to be a Gehenna. For eternity, he was to live among the great and virtuous as an untouchable, estranged from the family of God. He wandered miserably about the Ether, his face repulsive with tears and mucus, like a lost child. But his weeping abated when he noticed a bright golden glow he knew to be God.

He approached in the ecstatic hope that God was giving him this final chance, that He was as merciful as He was said to be. Squinting, he extended his arms to embrace the glow, and God's form revealed itself to him. God was an old woman in long, rustling skirts, naked from the waist up. In some features She reminded the somewhat disgusted Farb-Rothman of Golda Meir. She had gigantically fat breasts, the Mouse wrote, which were as firm and nurturing as those of a young mother. The law professor was stunned, but God smiled at him and said, "Only your mind is surprised, my little darling, not your heart"; and She gathered the professor into Her expansive bare bosom.

After reading the story, Farb-Rothman brought himself a styrofoam cup of coffee and then switched on his dictaphone. "Dear Claudia," he dictated:

> I am returning your "Logos" not because I don't like it—it's quite funny/poignant—but because I really don't think I can market it with the glossies. The hard truth is that they, the *Monocle* especially, don't want to know that Jews have ordinary lives . . . i.e., are ordinary law professors *à la* John Houseman who die fairly happily, albeit having ordinary doubts, and go to a pretty much ordinary end. (I say this not to attack the quality or the ending of your story; when I say ordinary, I guess I mean Gentile and am thinking I guess of what some call Jesus's "feminine qualities," when he is compared with Jehovah—re your "surprise ending." In other words, I imagine it would surprise a Gentile editor less than a Jewish intellectual, with the cult of the Madonna and all that, to discover that God is a woman.)
>
> To speak frankly, I've always had the feeling Jews are in the *Monocle* the way the ambassador from Swaziland ends up on the society pages. Little bald vegetarians who speak with accents, oversexed motleys with deviated septums and crazy mothers. Anthropological curiosities. I say this in a professional capacity, of course. You will notice that Bellow doesn't publish in the glossies much any more. His characters have become mainstreamish, bourgeois, if you will. Ozick, whom you spoke about with such understandable respect, is generally not in them for the opposite reason . . . too much earnestness, not enough anthropology (not the same thing as magic, which *because* it is magic [emphasis Farb-Rothman's secretary] has an everydayness about it, a religiosity, let's say). There's too much Take Me Seriously with the Ozick sort. Elkin, now a big prizewinner, is afraid that Jewish protagonists will make him parochial, i.e., unmarketable. I am telling you the man is right. A capital L liberal takes only himself seriously, if you see what I mean.
>
> I would try some of the literary mags—*N. Amer. Rev.*, *Salmagundi* (maybe). Otherwise, all I can say right now is sorry and thanks.
>
> Cordially yours,
> Robert Farb-Rothman

And here it was Farb-Rothman who more or less innocently first called her "this sort of literary mouse," even as his secretary was typing his sympathetic letter, as he ate lunch with the fiction editors of the *Monocle* and *Social Contract*, and the food editor of *Fifth Avenue*.

But for a determined young woman, such a letter can only strengthen resolve. Impugned, after all, was not the writing, but the prejudices of philistine editors. It was just another sour truth to hold close and nibble.

So, in the ensuing months, Claudia Bemel wrote story after unsold story—jagged, angry polyhedrons of Ideas. In cold gray aluminum, she framed and hung in her room as a kind of icon to her struggle, three consecutive rejection slips from the editor of *Fiction Canada*—scrawled notes on photocopied letterheads, each of which faithfully read "Not our kind of story." To bolster her morale and improve her standing for at least the purposes of a résumé or cover letter, she solicited a few book reviews, as well as an assignment to do an account of a readng by Toni Morrison, for the Montreal *Gazette* (her local newspaper), and an essay on the sexual politics of language for the Toronto women's quarterly, whose editors regretted that they could pay her only in contributor's copies.

"Logos" meanwhile had made the rounds, retyped and repackaged again and again. Every periodical of any repute had seen it, as had a few anthologizers besides. Claudia Bemel's faith in it remained nonetheless undaunted, stoked as it was by the opinion of a reputable New York agent who found it funny slash poignant, and nonconforming. So it was more out of ambition than wickedness that she resubmitted the story to the *Monocle*, with minor changes (excising the reference to Portnoy, for example) and the following note:

> Dear Fiction Editor:
>
> I have enclosed a story by Simcha Smirnoff, a distant relation who was murdered during the massacre at Babi Yar. I recently became heir to his papers (all that remains of his estate) and was thrilled to find among them a score or so of stories, a verse novel in the manner of *Eugene Onegin*, and many, many poems. The enclosed story, "Legal Fictions," is the first of Smirnoff's writings that I have finished translating. I of course will be glad to send you more of this unique work as I proceed with the awesome task of rendering all of it into English, for pos-

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sible publication under the byline, "Translated from the Russian by . . ."

Yours sincerely,
Claudia Bemel

Claudia Bemel was of course calculating that if the *Monocle*'s "slush" reader had read "Logos" in the first place, he wouldn't remember it out of the hundreds of stories that came across his desk each week. She recalled (gleefully, perhaps) the rumor current a few years before that someone had typed out one of Jerzy Kosinski's books, verbatim, on bond paper, and sent it around as an unsolicited manuscript; even the book's publishers had refused it (so the story went), adding apologetically that the writer showed promise. And she had been mindful of the practicalities: if Smirnoff, the putative writer, was dead (in a Russian mass grave, yet), they would unquestioningly make out the check in her name, as heir to the estate. Eventually, once the *Monocle* had published a dozen or so of her stories in this manner, and Knopf had put a collection of them on its fall list, she would expose them all as literary dupes.

And indeed, immediately upon receiving the manuscript, the "slush" reader at the *Monocle* squirreled it (poor wretch) to the fiction editor, who wasted no time in attemping to phone Claudia Bemel, executrix of the literary estate of Simcha Smirnoff. But the editor failed in this, finding that the young translator shared with the *Monocle*'s editorial staff a cantankerous affection for privacy, or mystery, which is to say her number was unlisted. (In fact, she lived with her parents, whose number was quite accessible when associated with the name and address on Claudia Bemel's covering letter and self-addressed-stamped-envelope; but, like many of his species, the editor was not a creature of sufficient patience, ambition, and pragmatism to take this detour.) Therefore, a week after Claudia Bemel had submitted "Legal Fictions," a.k.a. "Logos," to the *Monocle,* it was returned with the following letter:

Dear Ms. Bemel:

Unfortunately, we do not feel that your translation of "Legal Fictions," by the Russian writer Simcha Smirnoff, will work out for us in the manner you propose. We say this not from lack of interest or as a matter of literary valuation, but out of an abundance of caution. We do not feel we can deal with these writings—as fascinating and valuable as they seem—without first being satisfied of certain, mostly legal, matters. To that end, would you consider allowing Mr. Smirnoff's papers to be examined by a Russian specialist, as well as by our lawyer? Once satisfied that we are safe in proceeding, we would be happy to discuss publication of "Legal Fictions" and other of the writings.

Will you please phone me collect at the number designated on our letterhead? I am sure you will agree that such historic papers deserve special care.

Sincerely,
Sean Billingsley

Of course, a writer unardent in her mission would have lost nerve, perhaps undertaken something as rash as a confession in the hope that such an action would at least attract notice for her plight. A foot in the door is a foot in the door. The so-called Mouse, however, waited a decent interval (the obligatory thirty days her rejected manuscripts always lay moribund on editors' desks), and then, talking herself into a breathless state of mind, wrote to the *Monocle*:

Dear Mr. Billingsley:

As it turns out, you were wise to proceed cautiously on my translation of "Legal Fictions" by Simcha Smirnoff. What a tempest in a samovar! My succession to the literary estate is now being challenged by certain of my cousins, and possibly a great-aunt (formerly favorite). My lawyer advises that I not deal further with these papers, for now, anyway. He is holding them in trust for me and says that, really, I shouldn't even discuss them.

As a struggling writer, I am just devastated about this, particularly as it causes difficulties with your estimable *Monocle*. I will communicate with you on developments as soon as it is legally feasible to do so. I really am so sorry.

With cordial regrets,
Claudia Bemel
For the estate of Simcha Smirnoff
Montreal

Upon placing her carbon of the letter in the "Logos" file, Claudia Bemel consoled herself with Farb-Rothman's letter of the previous year ("funny," "poignant"). She saw now that he was only partly right. The broader truth was, every second Jew on the continent had become a writer. Even though as a woman she had something new to add to the tragicomedies of Fuchs, the Roths, Friedman, Elkin, etc. (even Norma Rosen wrote about men), you couldn't blame editors for feeling a surfeit. It was simpler than Farb-Rothman had said: she was a generation too late; the American Jew as exemplar of alienated personhood, the prototype for Lost in Space, a dweller on limbo's bridge, like (she noted in her journal) the lonely visionaries of the prophetic books tying the Pentateuch to the Gospel, was old hat.

She took a job as junior translator with Canada Casualty and Life Assurance, spending her days with the *Petit Robert*, "Terminology Used or Accepted by Statistics Canada," *Glossaire de la finance* . . . contorting a language that held nuance for everything but the concrete, transmogrifying pamphlets on unemployment insurance ("*Protégez-vous contre le chomage*!") and dental plans ("*Vous êtes permis deux visites par an*"), wallet inserts on What to Do if You're in an Accident ("*Si vous avez un accident . . .*"), the schedules and addenda to contracts, mortgages, and tables of liability that put a cash value on individual eyeballs, sex parts, and fingers.

But inevitably, one evening, as she was organiz-

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ing her possessions in preparation for taking an apartment of her own (a flat, rather, in an old rooming-house near McGill), she turned up the "Logos" file and, rereading the story and all of its accumulated correspondence, contemplating the effort and faith she had invested, felt herself called back into battle. It's true, you'll never outmuscle them, she told herself. But that was what God gave a Jew brains for in the Diaspora. Like Esther, she saw what she must do.

For a couple of days, the main character was an insurance-company executive, then he ended up back as a lawyer, although not a professor, but an editor for a case-reporting service. He was in charge of headnotes and indexing. No longer was he Jewish.

He lived in this sort of transitional area of town, between downtown and the 'burbs. No, that sounded like symbolism, purgatory or something. He lived in this town, period. Cedarvale, maybe. Or Oakwood.

He was married to this woman who . . . well, just to this woman of razor-sharp physique and demeanor who had never abandoned her private-school habit (a little plurisignation was all right) of tartan, knee-socks, deck shoes. Deck shoes or saddle shoes? Deck shoes. They had a Volvo. No. They had an old Toyota, beloved but slightly abused, the way an old dog is. And a station wagon, three or four years old. A great big one, with fake wood trim. And they had this twelve-year-old boy with a brain tumor. And twin girls, ten years old. Just like that. Two cars, a basket case, and twins. Of course, you didn't see much of the basket case. Probably there was only a glimpse or two of him, lolling, drooling. The rest of it was the man going to his office in the 'burbs and the woman being reference librarian for the Attorney General (they had met in a government law library) when she wasn't looking after the basket case, their suffering barely straining their smiles.

The truth was, probably they wanted the basket case to croak. That was it. Each day that brought Michael (the case) closer to death . . . does Michael die? Not crucial, really . . . the thing to do is write as though you're exhibiting snapshots. On each day that brings Michael closer to death, the man and wife, privately, without telling one another, feel something rustle . . . in their hearts . . . ugh! . . . feel something expand inside of them. Something embryonic. Ovarian. Thrilling? No. Probably they don't feel much of anything. Numbness is all. A person should not mean but be.

Anyway, the story ends at Sunday dinner. Or after, would be better. The couple's eyes meet as she passes him the what? butter or something (shit!), creamed lox, for God's sake?, and each simultaneously feels that embryonic whatever push, break out, flood, test its wings, something. Or, anyway, they get aroused. They make love afterward (there is no description, only a rather grainy, unrevealing Polaroid), while the twins play cards in the hallway outside the bedroom door. Michael is left by himself, making small noises in his outsized crib.

But where's God? Claudia Bemel was driven to ask herself. For although it is not sophisticated for a modern impressionist writer to show people meandering around the Great Reward (Hell is okay as long as it looks like a shopping mall or the headnote department of a legal publisher), it is tacitly accepted that people, especially the writer, are going there, eventually. That was the whole point, wasn't it? It was the difference between the impressionist writer and a former "Jewish" one like her—*she* had believed in earthly happy endings, the kind Henry James once disparaged as "a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs, and cheerful remarks"; they didn't need to.

So where is God? she asked, and finally found Him in the top drawer of a night-table next to the lawyer's bed, buried under socks (poorly sorted), credit-card receipts, forgotten coins, broken watches, an old luggage tag, a bus transfer, two Ramada Inn stir-sticks, a little pocket knife with tobacco-flakes in its hinges, panty hose . . . in a Gideon Bible the lawyer had taken from a Martha's Vineyard motel he and his wife had stayed in many years ago. Yes, many years ago, on their honeymoon, in fact, when they'd driven along the East coast, years ago. On their honeymoon. He remembers it for the first time in all those years while he makes love to (with?) his wife and the twins are playing cards, etcetera. He feels guilty about having lifted it. There is a Madonna on the frontispiece, full of bosom, nurturing the divine infant.

Yes, there was the danger here of Mythos with a large M, but Claudia Bemel couldn't resist. She was only human. A sop to the humans. No one would notice, much. She changed the title back to "Logos," and after the *Monocle* had published the story, it was made into a film called *Arctic Front*. For the film, the Gideon Bible became a crucifix that had years ago fallen to the floor from its nail at the head of the couple's bed.

Arctic Front got mostly good reviews, but only *Monocle* types and movie junkies saw it. It did, however, very much improve the careers of the young actors who played the husband and wife. Claudia Bemel, no longer called the Mouse, by anyone, blamed the poor attendance on the film's title. Farb-Rothman, her agent, explained that the movie people felt the public would be confused by "Logos." Claudia Bemel suggested that they re-release it under "Legal Fictions."

"I'll try it out on them," Farb-Rothman promised, long distance. "I'll tell them, 'Now that the weathermen have seen it, let's go for the lawyers.' How's that, Claude? Weathermen and lawyers. I'll try it out on them."

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Cohen at the Bat

Tilden G. Edelstein

ANDY COHEN and his brother Syd together spent a total of seventy years in professional baseball, but were major leaguers for only seven years. Andy Cohen played in 32 games for the New York Giants in 1926, 120 in 1928, and 101 in 1929. He coached one year for the Philadelphia Phillies in 1960. Syd Cohen pitched 18 innings for the Washington Senators in 1934, 36 in 1936, and 55 in 1937. In a sport which, more than any other, revels in statistics, neither man counts significantly.

What distinguished them from other ballplayers of the 1920's and before was that their surname was Cohen, and that they did not change it, as had seven previous Cohens, to such non-Jewish-sounding names as Kane, Bohne, Cooney, and Ewing.

The Cohen brothers were recruited as part of the widespread efforts of Connie Mack and others in the early decades of the 20th century to change baseball's image from a game played by barroom drunkards to a sport played by a variety of respectable Americans. Both were also unabashedly recruited and publicized as Jewish players. Seeking Jewish fans to buy baseball tickets was an acknowledged reason why the management of the Pacific Coast League's San Francisco Seals signed Syd Cohen in 1928: "To develop a Jewish ballplayer who will be a star."

The Jewish identity of Andy Cohen was even more critical to the Giants' front office. The Giants of the 1920's had to compete at the box office with the New York Yankees—a team that, with Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Earle Combs, Bob Meusel, Tony Lazzeri, Herb Pennock, and Waite Hoyt, has often been described as the greatest of all time. The construction in 1923 of Yankee Stadium, holding twice as many fans as the Polo Grounds, where the Giants played, was another factor in the competition for the New York sports dollar that was leaving the Giants a poor second.

New York's enormous second-generation immigrant population, the Giants' management believed, could help fill the Polo Grounds. For baseball, like other entertainment industries of the era, strove to capitalize on the eagerness of ethnic audiences to identify with one of their own and on the ethnic curiosity of other groups. In Cincinnati and St. Louis, for example, the managements of the Reds and the Cardinals advertised in German-language newspapers to entice the large German-speaking populations of those cities to the ballpark. By 1926, even the Yankees, with their successful cast of stars, were courting New York's extensive Italian population by featuring one of the few major-league Italian baseball players in their second baseman, pointedly nicknamed "Poosh 'Em Up Tony" Lazzeri.

"New York," said the Giants' manager, John McGraw, "has a tremendous number of fans of Jewish blood and we know that they would like to see a Jewish player on the Giants." Encouraged by the boxing and box-office success of Benny Leonard, Kid Kaufman, and Jack Bernstein, the Giants in 1923 had recruited outfielder Moses Solomon who was dubbed the "Rabbi of Swat" but who failed with his bat to resemble Babe Ruth, the "Sultan of Swat." Three years later, the Giants put their hopes for a star Jewish player on Andy Cohen.

Andy Cohen was born in 1904 and Syd Cohen in 1908. Their parents were immigrants from Eastern Europe, who arrived in Baltimore in the 1890's. Their father, a cigar maker, played semi-pro ball in Baltimore. When I interviewed the Cohen brothers in April 1982, Andy said that reading Horatio Alger books and later the example of Babe Ruth had inspired him to use his baseball talents. Ruth, who was the idol of most young ballplayers, had begun his career with the Baltimore Orioles of the American Association. As a child Ruth had been abandoned by his parents who placed him in a school for incorrigible boys. What Andy and Syd Cohen shared with Ruth besides Baltimore was an absent father: the elder Cohen remained in Baltimore when the family moved to arid El Paso for the mother's respiratory problems. For a long time the family barely supported itself by selling, from its rented house, groceries bought on consignment.

The Cohen boys starred in several sports during high school and Syd was sufficiently talented to play in the so-called Outlaw League with some of the major-league players who had been banned from professional baseball as a result of the Black Sox scandal of 1919. Andy Cohen, after accepting a scholarship to the University of Alabama, pledged a Jewish fraternity, was elected the first Jewish captain of the Alabama baseball team, and played for one year for Waco of the Texas League before he joined the Giants. Syd matriculated at Southern Methodist University, transferred to Alabama, and starred in baseball and basketball before being signed to play for the San Francisco Seals.

It was in Philadelphia in 1926 that Andy Cohen played his first game in a Giants uniform, as a replacement for the injured star second baseman, Frankie Frisch, the "Fordham Flash." Immediately, sportswriters gleefully headlined the rookie's fielding: "From Cohen to Kelly" (first baseman George "Highpockets" Kelly—this nick-

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name had no ethnic meaning, it simply referred to the fact that Kelly habitually belted his pants high above the waist).

Cohen, appearing only briefly as a Giant in 1926, batted .257 and was then sent down for seasoning to the Buffalo Bisons of the International League. He had such a glorious year with Buffalo that Andy Cohen Day was declared in Bison Stadium and he was feted by a committee of Jewish organizations, including the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the local chapter of his old Alabama fraternity.

For many reasons the New York Giants in 1928 needed Andy Cohen, who had batted .353 for Buffalo. McGraw, accustomed to winning, hadn't captured a pennant since 1924 or a World Series since 1922. Still worse for the box office and for McGraw's ambitions, the rival Yankees had run away with the 1927 American League pennant by 19 games, and Ruth had monopolized the headlines by hitting his record-breaking 60 home runs, while Gehrig had driven in a phenomenal 175 runs. Adding to the Giants' troubles was the shocking and unpopular trade to the Boston Braves of Rogers Hornsby, who had batted .361 in 1927.

With the traditional optimism accompanying spring training, the New York *Times* judged the Giants to be pennant favorites because they had acquired "Lefty" O'Doul, Andy Cohen, and Frank Hogan. James Francis Hogan, dubbed "Shanty" Hogan in response to his Boston Irish roots, befriended Andy Cohen. Hogan, a long-ball hitter, was the only player in the starting lineup who had not batted over .300 in the previous year. (During the coming winter, the vaudeville team of Cohen and Hogan—in Boston, expediently called Hogan and Cohen—would gross $1,800 a week doing comedy routines which mixed ethnic and baseball humor.)

On opening day, April 11, 1928, some 30,000 fans endured the wind and chilling weather at the Polo Grounds to see the Giants meet the Boston Braves. The excitement was heightened by the return to the Polo Grounds of second baseman Rogers Hornsby in a Braves uniform. The newspaper photographers repeatedly posed Hornsby shaking hands with his rookie replacement, Andy Cohen. By the end of the game, which the Giants won 5-2, Cohen had been involved in four of the five Giant runs, batting in two and scoring two. Hornsby sweetened the victory by grounding out to Cohen in his first and last times at bat.

Reaction to Andy's feats was ecstatic. After the game, thousands of fans rushed onto the field. He was lifted high into the air, reported the New York *Times*, "perched on the shoulders of New York fandom. In fact, you might say with truth that Andy Cohen was sitting on top of the world." Carried around the Polo Grounds, he struggled free when halfway to the centerfield clubhouse, only to find himself in the midst of a "solid mass of humanity that pushed, pulled, and grunted—but didn't move." Finally a Giants coach and some players formed a flying wedge to rescue him. As Andy mounted the clubhouse steps "panting and rumpled," several thousand fans gave him a "conqueror's ovation." In the locker room, filled with reporters, the veteran manager McGraw said, "It was the greatest ovation I have ever seen given any player in all my life."

The newspapers, of course, trumpeted the new hero. Grantland Rice, the country's premier sportswriter, commented: "It was Andy Cohen, the young Jewish baseball player from Alabama University, who stepped into Hornsby's job at second for the Giants. . . . It was Andy Cohen, the Tuscaloosa Terror, who drove in two Giant runs, scored two more on his own hook, covered the infield side of the Polo Grounds, like a ballplaying centipede, to send the Giants spinning along to victory. . . ." The *Times* concluded: "Andy Cohen took New York by storm. He captured the hearts of 30,000 fans as only a Ruth or a Walter Johnson could grip them."

The baseball poets also showed their appreciation:

There is music in the ghetto as
the daylight peters out;
There is many a wild falsetto as
the children laugh and shout,
And the saxophones are blowin'
and the citizens are crowin'
As they think of Andy Cohen and
his famous two-base clout.

Another poem was titled "Cohen at the Bat":

The outlook wasn't cheerful for
the Giants yesterday,
They were trailing by a run with
but four innings left to play.
When Lindstrom flied to Richbourg and Terry weakly popped,
It looked as though those Bostons
had the game as good as copped.
But Jackson smacked a single
over Eddie Farrell's pate,
And Harper drew a pass because
they feared him at the plate.
And from the stands and bleachers the cry of "Oy, Oy" rose,
And up came Andy Cohen half a
foot behind his nose.
There was ease in Bob Smith's
manner and a smile on Hornsby's face,
For they figured they had Andy
in the tightest sort of place.
It was make or break for Andy,
while the fans cried, "Oy, Oy,
Oy."
And it wasn't any soft spot for a
little Jewish boy.
And now the pitcher has the ball
and now he lets it go.
And now the air is shattered by
the force of Casey's blow.
Well nothing like that happened,
but what do you suppose?
Why, little Andy Cohen socked
the ball upon the nose.
Then from the stands and bleachers the fans in triumph roared,
And Andy raced to second and
the other runner scored.
Soon they took him home in
triumph amidst the blare of
auto honks.
There may be no joy in Mudville,
but there's plenty in the Bronx.

Cohen's debut was judged so important that the *Times* did not limit its comments to the sports pages. "Hogans," it noted in an editorial, "have always played good baseball; so have the Kellys and the Caseys, the Delahantys and the Bresnehans, so have the Wagners and the Zimmers. And the Lazzeris, the Lajoies, and the Chances have contributed stars for many years. But the Cohens . . .? None of their kinfolk has ornamented the professional diamond in New York." The *Times* editorial concluded that when Coh-

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en succeeds there is "much more than just a baseball game at stake."

In his first three games, Cohen got eight hits—including a home run and a double with the bases loaded—and drove in seven runs. By May, he was even honored by Jewish Pittsburgh Pirates fans as the local Young Men's Hebrew Association presented him with luggage. So many letters of admiration poured in that the Giants assigned a secretary to him. Cohen was housed in a hotel suite, reported the *Sporting News*, to allow him to meet "mobs of worshipers. Thousands of Jewish fans have waited a long time to see one of their race make good as a Giant regular." In late June, Andy Cohen Day was celebrated at the Polo Grounds—featuring the presentation to him of 1,500 silver dollars by the Knights of Pythias. Will Rogers reported: "I am going out to see Andy Cohen. He's bigger than Aimee Semple McPherson out home."

Only sportswriter Paul Gallico protested:

> It seems to me a sort of shabby trick to play on young Cohen to send him up onto the diamond to play the Jew in public as well as the ballplayer. Finesse and tact have been lacking in the entire handling of the affair. If Andy Cohen makes good—and it's too early to say that he has done so—he will have surmounted more obstacles than any other big-league player ever faced. . . . Andy is forced to parade his religion and commercialize it whether he wants to or not. It seems to me a difficult position for a youngster breaking into the big leagues, or anything else. . . . Every time Andy comes to bat he feels he must make a hit, not only for John McGraw, his teammates, and the City of New York, but for the Jewish race as well, which is a large order.
>
> It looks to me as though these days the baseball magnates are enslaving not only the bodies of their hired help but their souls as well.

ANDY COHEN was a college-educated, country boy from Texas. But being Jewish—and looking Jewish, or being thought to look Jewish—was what seemed most important about him to the press. Recall the parody of "Casey at the Bat," quoted earlier, which describes Cohen as being "half a foot behind his nose" and rhymes "Oy, Oy, Oy" with "little Jewish boy." The *Baseball Magazine*, a national periodical, published a story about him in 1928 illustrated by drawings of Cohen and his admirers. His fans, dressed in hats and long coats and wearing long sideburns and beards, are depicted as saying, "Oy, oy, Endy." Andy is portrayed as a college man dressed in "conservative clothes," but the writer notes that Andy's most prominent feature is his typical "Hebrew nose." Cohen's "black beady eyes" and "thick eyebrows" are also mentioned. The article does go on to suggest, however, that when more and more fans shout, "Oy, oy, Endy," then baseball will be assured of Cohen's success both on the field and at the box office.

A New York *Evening World* reporter, in an article called, "Still His Name and Nose Have Made Things Hard," praised Cohen as fulfilling the desired image of the Jew as ballplayer: "He is exactly the correct mixture of modesty and self-assurance. There is nothing crawling about his nature. Nor is he the least bit boastful. Just states the facts without raising his voice and looks you in the eye." Cohen told the reporter: "Say, if you're going to draw my picture, . . . go easy on this hook, will you? The cartoonists down South jumped on this hook of mine. . . . Oh, what a lot of fun they got out of it! You'd have thought it was the most important thing about me. As a matter of fact, it wasn't such a bad hook until it got broken a couple of times playing football and basketball. It had a much more graceful curve to it. Kind of shorten it up an inch or two, will you?"

But if his name and his looks made Cohen attractive to New York's Jewish fans and others curious to see a Jew play baseball, it was also true that he neither sounded nor acted like the stereotyped Jew, and this made him attractive to people who believed that baseball truly was the national game because it exemplified America as a great melting pot of varied ethnic and religious groups. (Twenty years later, Jackie Robinson, the first black player to be brought to the major leagues, would also project the same combination of clear minority identity and freedom from negative minority stereotypes.)

Andy's acceptable image as a Jewish ballplayer was not the same, of course, as achieving stardom on the field. "He isn't a Frisch or Hornsby," noted the *Times*. During his first full season as a Giant, he batted a respectable .274 with 9 home runs and 56 runs batted in. In 1929, he hit .294 but was not played regularly. In 1930, the Giants sent him down to the Newark Bears of the International League.

When Cohen failed, the New York sportswriter Dan Parker observed: "Andy made the mistake of thinking that three strikes were the symbol of his race instead of three [pawnbroker] balls." McGraw strongly wanted Cohen to succeed, but after Cohen had a particularly bad day on the field, McGraw, at the race track, bet on a horse ridden by a Jewish jockey. When the horse lost, McGraw complained, "They can't ride either."

One chronicler of Jews in sports incorrectly suggested that Cohen was dropped from the Giants because he had "slowed down in the field alarmingly," but added that it was not from lack of trying. He explained: "If the Jew has a single constitutional weakness in baseball, it is his feet. It has been noticed, over a long period of years, that Jews develop flat feet early in their careers and seem to slow up prematurely. Italians have the identical trouble." This author reported, but did not endorse, the Lamarckian view put forth by an unidentified Jewish ballplayer who suggested that his people got that way centuries ago because they had had to trudge through the desert on their flight from Egypt.

BY THE time Andy Cohen's brother Syd reached the major leagues in 1934, the intensity of the quest for a Jewish star had diminished. The Giants had enlisted Harry Danning and Phil Weintraub, but most dramatic was the ascension to stardom of Hank Greenberg. Raised in the Bronx, Greenberg, according to a

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Sporting News writer, "made good without going into the ready-to-wear line." Greenberg, a towering six-foot-four-inches tall, was described as neither looking nor sounding Jewish. In fact, his face did look Jewish; he was not, however, the proverbial "little Jew." Greenberg would lead the Detroit Tigers to a pennant in 1934, drive in 183 runs in 1937, hit 58 home runs in 1938, and eventually be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

When Syd Cohen came to the Washington Senators in 1934, shortstop Buddy Myer was the team's established Jewish star. Syd was seen by the press as the stereotypically eccentric left-hander, but in contrast to Ring Lardner's dumb southpaw, he was also portrayed as smart. Yet when he became a major leaguer there was very little interest in the fact that he was Jewish.

Indeed, among the ironies of his career is that in 1931, before he got to the majors, Syd Cohen played in Mexico for Nogales of the Arizona-Texas League under the name of Pablo Garcia. The majority of Nogales fans were Mexican. When the Anglo-American manager tried to release a Mexican left-handed pitcher who had failed to last three innings, the Mexican fans threatened a boycott. Bitterness grew because there was only one other Mexican player on the team, even though the Mexican governor of the province was one of the club's owners. The headline in the *Sporting News* read: "Soldiers with Fixed Bayonets Patrol Field & Keep Order; Crowd Demands Mexican on Team."

In response to this crisis, the Mexican was retained, but more ingenious was the use of Syd Cohen. His deep tan and fluent Spanish—he could "*habla español* like a bullfighter"—enabled him to pass as Pablo Garcia. Twenty years later, he would return to Mexico as Syd Cohen and manage the Juarez Indios. But many Mexicans still called him Pablo as he brought Juarez its first league championship.

After leaving the majors, Andy and Syd Cohen went on to have successful minor-league careers. Andy Cohen was a star second baseman for seven years with the Minneapolis Millers and a winning manager of the Denver Bears. His brother was on twelve different teams in eight different leagues as player, coach, and manager; he also worked as an umpire. Syd Cohen is most proud of having struck out Lou Gehrig five of the seven times he faced him. He was also the last pitcher in the American League to strike out Babe Ruth and to serve him a home-run ball before the "Sultan of Swat" joined the Boston Braves of the National League for his final major-league season.

Today, Andy and Syd Cohen, respectively seventy-nine and seventy-five years old, remain baseball enthusiasts and wear University of Texas-El Paso baseball caps at home. They express little bitterness about their baseball careers; they still love the game. But they also believe that they were good enough to have played more years in the major leagues than they did, and were high enough in the minor leagues through much of their careers to have expected recall to the majors at any time. Perhaps they are correct—but many other minor leaguers have believed the same thing.

As for anti-Semitism, it was most pronounced for Syd Cohen during the years he played for the New Orleans Pelicans of the Southern Association. Andy Cohen too received his share of anti-Semitic epithets. As he told a reporter, "It does get to me sometimes. . . . I get mad, but it never pays to show it. I learned that a long time ago." Yet despite such problems, there were always many players and fans who supported both Syd and Andy Cohen throughout their long baseball careers.

It's Only Culture

Joseph Epstein

For all that so many people extol the period in American life known with chronological inexactitude as the 60's, looking back upon it fondly as a time of unrivaled freedom and creative disorder—"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive/ But to be young was very Heaven!"—I have never heard anyone of any seriousness extol its cultural achievements. There was the musical *Hair*, there were the Beatles, there was Pop Art, there were five or six notable movies, but of the creation of high art there was precious little. The *New York Review of Books* may have displayed on one of its covers a diagram of a Molotov cocktail, yet with the period's various cultural bombs not even that journal would have much to do.

Joseph Epstein *is the editor of the* American Scholar *and our regular fiction critic.* The Middle of My Tether, *a new book of his essays, was published last month by Norton.*

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It is puzzling, and the puzzle is compounded when one considers that the 50's, for all their advertised conformity, now appear a time of considerable achievement in the arts. There was Abstract Expressionism and the formation of the so-called New York School, there were a number of extremely impressive novels and an efflorescence of Jewish and other ethnic fiction, there were several splendid books of poetry, and there was a serious body of criticism. Putative freedom issuing in third- and fourth-rate art, putative conformity issuing in much first-rate art—are we in the presence of a paradox here? How does one account for this?

At least a partial answer might be found in the relationship between art and criticism in the two periods. To be sure, this relationship is one of immense complexity at all times. But of this complex relationship one thing can be said with a fair amount of confidence, and it is that art is primary. It is primary not only in the sense that art comes before criticism but primary also in the sense that art supplies the materials with which criticism has to work. So it is and so it has always been. Aristotle could not have written *The Poetics* without the art of Homer and the classical Greek dramatists to draw upon as models from which to formulate his critical theories. Criticism needs art more than art needs criticism, yet the two can exist and sometimes have existed in a roughly symbiotic relationship, each taking sustenance from the other. Criticism is propelled into thought by art, and art is reminded by criticism of what its true traditions, functions, and qualities ought to be. When criticism is doing its proper tutelary and evaluative job, art is in the position, to adopt a sports metaphor, of a confident and well-coached team.

Instead of performing the function of a coach, over the past fifteen or twenty years criticism has become a cheerleader. Jumping up and down, screaming on the sidelines, displaying its knobby knees and occasionally revealing itself to be wearing no pants under its short skirt, it has not only lost all semblance of control over the game but has become an off-the-field exhibition of its own. Meanwhile, out on the field, players shuffle in and out, every man for himself, each running his own eccentric patterns, while confusion reigns and the game all but falls apart. Such is the condition of art, specifically literary art, in our day.

How did the critics become cheerleaders, who issued their short skirts, who told them to expose themselves so boldly? These are questions one cannot help pondering while reading an odd but interesting new work of cultural criticism entitled *Panic Among the Philistines* by Bryan F. Griffin.* Griffin feels that the times are hideously out of joint. In his view, the wrong artists have been praised in the wrong terms by the wrong critics; contemporary culture, insofar as it involves the meeting of art with criticism, he sees as an almost unprecedented case of worse coming to worst.

Panic Among the Philistines touches upon the movies, visual art, drama, and rock music, but its main emphasis is on literature. A couple of years ago Griffin published two articles in *Harper's* in which he smashed away at a number of literary reputations of the day, among them those of such novelists as John Updike, John Cheever, John Irving, Joyce Carol Oates, William Styron, and John Barth. This time out Griffin concentrates his fire on the critics and reviewers responsible for the inflated reputations of our day and for the low state of our culture generally. *Panic Among the Philistines* by and large scants the question of how the rot set in and dwells instead—interminably, it sometimes feels—on the rot itself.

Griffin has combed the cultural criticism published in the newsmagazines and the large metropolitan dailies, with an occasional side trip over to the *New Yorker* and the *New York Review of Books*. Through the relentless use of quotation, he has put together an anthology of wretched criticism that rivals *The Stuffed Owl*, D.B. Wyndham Lewis's anthology of bad verse. The philistines of Griffin's title are the critics—they are chiefly reviewers and journalists—who, even though culture is their bailiwick, are themselves really without culture, or who, if they ever had it, have forgotten what culture is supposed to be about. The panic of these philistines, according to Griffin, set in "at the time of the great crash of 1980," by which point "most knew that it was all over, but nobody wanted to say it, because nobody could afford to say it: there were long careers and swollen reputations at stake, and more than a few long books as well."

Panic Among the Philistines is an almost unrelieved chronicle of wretched cultural excesses. No one can accuse its author of not having done his homework, and there is a certain amount of satisfaction in watching him catch out the various Jack Krolls, Doris Grumbachs, John Leonards, and Walter Clemonses —reviewers and critics of middle and lower cultural echelons —in one after another ludicrous piece of empty cultural chitchat. There has been no want of such people, who in recent years have regularly pronounced the stupid to be significant and the loathsome to be amusing. Much of what they have written in newspapers and newsmagazines has since found its best use in wrapping fish, but there was something decidedly fishy about it even when it was still in the typewriter. It is useful to have it held up to ridicule now, to demonstrate how very badly it smells.

To give a sample of Bryan Griffin's *modus operandi*: he mentions in connection with the publication of D. M. Thomas's novel *The White Hotel*, that Doris Grumbach "summed up all the fun with her increasingly tiresome trademark: 'What a splendid book!' " Then, in characteristic style, Griffin continues:

> But the waters had grown higher and wilder, and it had become difficult to distinguish Ms. Grumbach's cries from those of the terrified competition. "I have not been so thoroughly enveloped by a book since reading *Garp*," cried Laurie Stone of the *Village Voice*, trying to jump from one envelop to another without getting her thoughts wet in the process. She was having an awkward time of

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it, partly because Diane Johnson of *New West* was already hanging on to Mr. Thomas's Epic for dear life, just daring anyone to challenge her possessive ecstasy: "A great book . . . with Freud and the Holocaust and the erotic dreamings of a young woman," sang Ms. Johnson girlishly, keeping her head just above water: "a celebration of human consciousness and of the unconscious." "Very likely the best book to appear in 1981," snorted Ensign [Peter] Prescott of *Newsweek;* "Heartstunning," gasped [Christopher] Lehmann-Haupt of the *Times*; "I had found the book that would explain us to ourselves," sobbed Mr. Lehmann-Haupt's colleague [*sic*], Leslie Epstein, perhaps saying just a bit more than he'd intended to say. "Passionate, lyrical excess," panted young James Wolcott of *Esquire,* his little literary thighs pumping furiously as he tried (uncharacteristically) to keep up with the swim team. "A novel of erotic invention," thundered *New York* magazine, which had begun to take on water at an alarming rate. "Brutally explicit," promised the Book-of-the-Month Club. "Towers over virtually every other English-language work of fiction in the last two years," gasped *Publishers Weekly* weakly, and then everybody went under for the first time. They bobbed back up again, but they were beginning to look pretty soggy.

Ridicule, then, is Griffin's main weapon in *Panic Among the Philistines.* While on the one hand one feels that many of the people he ridicules richly deserve it, on the other hand one feels that ridicule does not truly get the job done. Bryan Griffin's style is a compound of two Toms: he writes with something of the knowingness about contemporary life of Tom Wolfe and the tendency to tirade of Thomas Carlyle. I use the word tirade with precision, for *Panic Among the Philistines* is a protracted composition marked by intemperate, vituperative, and highly censorious language. It has been said that civilization began when man first hurled an epithet instead of a spear, yet however bracing it may have been for Bryan Griffin to write the words, one wonders about the advisability of referring to John Irving as "schlock novelist John ('*Garp*') Irving." There are times, after all, when it is necessary to call a spade an implement extremely useful for digging.

It is a shame, really, for Bryan Griffin makes many a good point along his rather labored way. In a chapter entitled "The Important Subject," for instance, he takes out after reviewers and journalists who on every occasion drag sex into print, seeing the way to good psychic health where mainly only prurience lies. Griffin argues that this crowd of cultural commentators have been a vacuous lot—with "no real beliefs, no standards, no purpose"—who have often used sex to fill their vacuum. The chapter begins with a quotation from Gay Talese: "Sex is so very important; it is probably the most important thing. What is more important? I know of nothing." Earlier Griffin quotes Pauline Kael, whose critical appetite for sex and violence the editors of the *New Yorker* seem not to have noticed, and of whom he writes:

> It wasn't long before Ms. Kael's bizarre theories of violence began to get all wound up with her thoughts about Lust In The Back Row, and the results were just a tad embarrassing: "Squeamishness—surely with terror and prurient churnings under it?—is the basis of this good taste," she sneered, just daring anyone to accuse her of prurient squeamishness. Nobody knew quite what she had in mind, but the ragged troops gave her one last weary cheer for having aligned herself four-square against Delicacy, Discrimination, Breeding, and Good Taste, the Four Horsemen of the Cultural Apocalypse.

That is tonally overwrought, but not far off the mark. The reviewers and journalists Bryan Griffin writes about in *Panic Among the Philistines* have been, as a group, singularly fearful of getting caught in public with their trousers up.

Griffin is very amusing on the language of the reviewers and critics who are the subject of his book. This is the language that I have come to think of as blurbissimo—sentences and phrases in reviews and columns that can be lifted and used for purposes of advertising. In blurbissimo, books and other cultural artifacts are always "important," "exceptionally important," "myth-shattering," "major," and "quite simply the most important, myth-shattering book by a major writer." In this language the dreariest of novels becomes "life-affirming" or "life-enhancing," and an album by a rock singer becomes "a major work by a major artist." In his book *Hype,* Steven M. L. Aronson notes that "hype differs from advertising—which it employs, along with public relations, as accomplices—in that it is not directly paid for." The hype of our reviewers, according to Bryan Griffin, conduces to convince us that, culturally, we live in a Golden Age, when in fact what surrounds us are zinc and lead.

If, in American cultural life, the worst has risen to the top, Bryan Griffin blames this, in part, on the rise of democracy and mass education, "with the mediocre crowding out the excellent, simply because there were more of the former than the latter." He writes:

> By 1980, there were at least two artists in every garage and a philosopher in every pot. The museum basements were clogged with interchangeable 20th-century masterworks, the library floors were piled high with last week's dazzling erotic epics, the theaters were thick with thousands of rudderless critics, the airwaves were cacophonous with the meaningless gobbles of cut-out intellectuals and apprentice pundits; and still the stuff came spewing out.

Most of the producers and the critics of culture, in his view, are in some fundamental sense spiritually deficient people. "So we are talking, in the final analysis, about losers," who "were losers because they had lost themselves."

And why did these losers wish to exert so powerful an influence on their culture? Griffin believes he knows:

> For the obvious reason: they were envious of whole-souled men and women, and jealous of the human spirit. Because they were bewildered by the deepest human emotions and aspirations—because they had no conception of

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what it was that men and women had been talking about and playing at for all those centuries—they *had* to remake the society if their own lives were to have any meaning. It is a natural human instinct to try to appease one's confusions by pretending that they are not confusions at all, but virtues. People who cannot share in the common human spirit resent that spirit when they see it in others, and seek to destroy it, that they may feel whole themselves.

Bryan Griffin, it ought by now to be quite clear, is a moralist, which to my mind is not a bad thing to be. But moralism does have its limits, and these show up not always to good effect in *Panic Among the Philistines*. As a moralist, he leans rather heavily on the determinacy of character in human events. As he blames the rise of the reviewers he contemns largely on their bad character, so does he say, toward the close of his book, that "we can't have good art until we have good men." While there have been good artists who have been good men, this nonetheless seems to me a highly dubious statement. Tolstoy yearned to be a good man—but was he? Was James Joyce a good man? Was Proust? Kakfa? Thomas Mann? If we have to wait for good men before we have good art, I think we are safe in making plans for at least the next few weekends.

While moralism is a useful means of judging the middle- and lower-echelon reviewers and cultural journalists—for it does seem apparent that people of good character could not have written the things they have written—it does not account adequately for how they were able to rise to their positions of power over the culture. On this question Bryan Griffin is not much help, and in this respect *Panic Among the Philistines* resembles a chronicle of the bubonic plague that deals chiefly with the rats who carried it. One wants to know how these rats got past the city walls. What caused sanitary conditions to break down? Where were the city fathers? And how can future waves of plague be prevented?

In attempting to find the answers to these rather complex questions, I would begin with the rise of interest in culture generally, which was itself a result of the increase in enrollments in American universities. Sometime in the late 50's and early 60's greater numbers of people became more interested in the arts. The nature of this interest was a far from simple matter. It was hedged about with insecurity; it was associated with social status. But for all that, it was quite real. Culture became harder and harder to ignore; not to have seen the hot movie, not to have read the current bestseller, not to have the obligatory opinion on the fashionable painters became a more and more difficult position for the college-educated and upwardly mobile to sustain. Confidence in the old comfortable philistinism was shot as businessmen began to be dragged off by their wives to see Beckett plays and young couples decorated their apartments with Chagall prints and posters. Culture for the millions was no longer a prophecy but a fact.

Newspapers and popular periodicals were not ahead of the populace here. With the exception only of theater critics, and perhaps in some cities of music critics, to write about culture for a newspaper was not a favored and was probably a dead-end job. Most movie critics were gentle flacks who in exchange for a few free junkets to the West Coast applauded in print Hollywood's latest creations. Outside New York, art critics were unknown except perhaps to local artists and museum directors. In Chicago, where the *Tribune* had a book section, books tended to be reviewed by English teachers at Notre Dame and Indiana. At *Time* and *Newsweek* both, the culture sections were known intramurally as "the back of the book," a phrase that at least in those precincts was heavily redolent of "the back of the bus."

But culture as a subject quite quickly got to the front of the bus. Sometimes, indeed, it has seemed to be driving the bus, or at any rate to hold substantial shares in the company. A few years ago one could scarcely go out among the educated classes without having seen the movie of the month and knowing, in addition, what Kael said and Simon said and Sarris said. Museum attendance is up enormously, and for special exhibits like the Vatican show one's tickets specify a time within a half-hour when one will be permitted entrance. Figures like Truman Capote and Gore Vidal, Norman Mailer and Lillian Hellman have become national celebrities. Any list of the ten best known people in Chicago would have to include the city's two movie critics. Money has lent an additional touch of glamor, for culture has become a high-stakes game, with millions floating around the table, and a writer can become a multimillionaire quicker than you can say four-book contract. E.M. Forster once envisioned a society in which everyone would be an aristocrat; if he were alive today he might have to change aristocrat to artist. Art in any case enjoys a prestige no longer quite available to aristocracy. For nearly two decades now art has been revered, "in," extremely fashionable.

The principles of fashion may in fact explain contemporary culture better than any other. It is by now a commonplace that ideas, like clothes and hairdos, are subject to fashion. And the two chief ideas that have come into fashion over the past twenty or so years—roughly the same period as the rise of Bryan Griffin's reviewers and journalists—have been sexual freedom and the loose bag of notions known as cultural liberalism, which include a wide tolerance for change mixed with a contempt for tradition and for the middle classes (from which, of course, most liberals come). There is a point of confluence between the spirit of liberalism and the spirit of fashion, and Kennedy Fraser, the *New Yorker*'s writer on fashion, though liberalism is not here her subject, makes my point when she writes: "Fashion is in ceaseless pursuit of things that are about to look familiar and in uneasy flight from things that have just become a bore. Pretending, frenziedly, to market enthusiasm for novelty, in fact it sells disgust for previous modes."

The fashionable mind is nothing if not neophiliac, or avid for the new. It seeks not merely to go with the flow but to be out in front of

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it, though not *too* far in front. As René König, in *The Restless Image*, a most interesting study of the phenomenon of fashion, puts it, the fashion snob "must always be ahead of his time—as a matter of principle." Of clear distinctions, of questions of good and bad, of how things really are, the fashionable mind could hardly care less. It never asks of itself, what do I truly think, what do I really believe, but instead, what ought I to think, what can I get away with appearing to believe? Bryan Griffin is correct when he says that the reviewers and journalists who are the subject of his book believe in nothing. They may think they have politics, they may think they have opinions, but these, finally, are a good deal less important to them than the dread prospect of being out of harmony with their times. To quote René König again: "The feeling of being in harmony gives a man a measure of security religion can never give him."

FASHION has always been with us, but it only flourishes, indeed sometimes dominates, in times and conditions of insecurity and considerable status anxiety. The past two decades, with their great change, their social turmoil, have been such a time; and the meeting of the college-educated middle classes with culture and intellectual things creates such a condition. If one habitually thinks of fashion in connection with clothes, perhaps it is well to recall that ideas and opinions about culture tend to be the clothing of the intellectual life. The middle classes, who have now come to take them up, have been rather in the position of the nouveaux riches in their nervousness about getting things straight. Once culture became so thoroughly subject to fashion, the function of the reviewers and journalists of the popular press became to inform them, in the realm of culture, what to wear and how to wear it.

One cannot help noticing that the reviewers and journalists in *Panic Among the Philistines* share many likenesses with the fashion press. (In Paris even the Communist press sends reporters to cover the shows of the leading couturiers.) Like the fashion press, these reviewers and journalists are, in effect, with the show. They are part, and an important part, of the mechanics of promotion. The idea of independence among them has neither been encouraged nor found to be enticing. As the fashion reporter is unlikely to pan the new show of a famous couturier, so is the modern reviewer unlikely to pan the latest product of the major novelist. (See the reviews of Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*.) After all, if he does so too often, he will not be invited back, he will lose his place as part of the show, he will henceforth no longer be an insider. Yet the relation between reviewer and famous novelist, like that between fashion reporter and famous couturier, is not necessarily cynical. As René König says: "Fashion not only makes the ordinary man giddy, it ultimately affects even the behavior of the critic and makes him its follower against his will."

Observers of fashion talk about "signal periods" and "trend setters." A signal period is the point that marks a new notion in fashion whose time has come; and a trend setter is someone who gives off the signal. I can think of no figure of our day to whose rise such terms better contribute understanding than Susan Sontag. What is of interest here, though, is how quickly the reviewers and journalists of the popular press pick up the signal, and consequently how drastically reduced is the time required for a new fashion in culture to take hold. Miss Sontag, for example, writes an essay on Camp in *Partisan Review*, and shortly thereafter Camp is discussed in *Time* and *Newsweek*, and not long after that on college campuses and in suburban homes. Of course, Miss Sontag has actually read Oscar Wilde and the other writers from whom she derived her notion of Camp, while the reviewers from *Time* and *Newsweek* have only read Susan Sontag, while the assistant professor or the suburban housewife has only read Jack Kroll of *Newsweek* or Frank Trippett of *Time*. Thus does a cultural notion diminish in substance as it heads toward bottom. Thus, too, does culture itself become thin and jittery.

It is the job of the reviewers and journalists on the cultural front to keep things jittery, which means to keep culture moving along at double-time: to discover and popularize fresh notions regularly, to come up with new important writers, to give the impression that we are living in an exciting time for culture. As they say about executioners and garbage collectors and other unpleasant jobs, somebody has got to do it. Yet who gave them their jobs? Publishers and editors did. As H. L. Mencken years ago pointed out, publishers and editors chiefly acquire their ideas about the world from their own newspapers and magazines. Somewhere along the line, they decided—at the New York *Times*, at the Washington *Post*, at *Time*, at *Newsweek*, and elsewhere—that this was the going thing and that they would, well, go with it.

STILL, one wonders what a dignified woman such as Katharine Graham thinks when, as publisher of *Newsweek*, she reads the drama critic she employs complaining about the inadequacy of the lighting during a play featuring frontal nudity? Or what a serious man such as A. M. Rosenthal, executive editor of the New York *Times*, felt when, morning after morning, he arose to read in his own newspaper the incomprehensible gabble of his chief cultural correspondent, John Leonard. Only two possibilities occur to me, neither of them very complimentary. First: "I guess it sells." And second: "Oh, well, it's only culture."

It is only culture, yet culture, now that it is partaken of by millions, is becoming of even greater social significance. As such it affects not only social change but change in the attitudes and behavior of masses of people. (I shall spare readers my sermonette on the intrinsic worth of culture, though here is probably where it ought to come in.) No one can hope to direct culture, Zinoviev-like, yet there is—or at least among intellectuals there used to be—an obligation to knock down everything in the realm of culture that is rubbishy and pretends to be otherwise. Today, however, the reviewers and journalists keep putting it all back up, making

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Sisyphus's job, in comparison with that of the serious critic of culture, seem like a sinecure.

Where, while all this has been going on, have been the guardians of culture, the critics and professors who are supposed to know what culture is and why it is important? A few have kept vigilant, repeatedly batting back all that is phony and trivial in the new culture. Some have simply ignored it. But many have gotten on the *Zeitgeist* express and have ridden with it. The new culture has infiltrated the universities, which for the most part have not chosen to argue with the set of assumptions currently available and so have allowed poorly taught courses in popular culture, second- and third-rate writers in residence, and a generally cheapened curriculum to pass undisturbed through their gates.

From the standpoint of the reviewers and journalists, of course, things do not look this way at all. On the contrary. They see themselves as brave voices singing out for advanced thought and exciting cultural innovation during the dark night of the Reagan administration and the Moral Majority. According to Griffin, their real panic comes from their awareness that their day is all but over. I quote him, while advising the reader to take 15 percent off for overstatement:

> By 1980, even the most persistent apologists for the old regime—the philosophical beneficiaries of the former establishment, the third-generation imitators and the elderly camp followers—had begun to understand that the long party was finally over, and that the giddy era of aberrant art and thought was about to be kicked aside as nothing more than that: one more aberration in the affairs of men, one more futile deviation from the human aim, one more wasted chance, one more century—a crucial one, this time—frittered away by half-souled harlequins disguised as full-hearted heirs of Athens. In its eleventh hour, Western culture had been led up the garden path, and abandoned in the brambles, one more time.

ALTHOUGH it came too late to be included in his book, I should imagine that the recent firing of Richard Locke as editor of the revived *Vanity Fair* magazine must have caused Bryan Griffin to declare a little holiday in his heart. Locke had been the deputy editor of the New York *Times Book Review*, and he had filled his new magazine with the writings of John Leonard, Walter Clemons, and others of the reviewers and journalists whose dreary works get such a roughing-up in *Panic Among the Philistines*. Despite some heavy checkbook editing, which allowed Locke to purchase lengthy manuscripts from Gabriel García Márquez and V. S. Naipaul, it took only three issues of the new *Vanity Fair* to expose itself, to Locke's employers and to the world, as an empty thing: pretentious, snobbish, and ultimately soulless. When the with-it are no longer with-it they really are completely without it—and so *Vanity Fair* very quickly proved. There is, then, reason to give Bryan Griffin high marks for prophecy.

It would be nice to report that the demise of the reviewers and journalists of the popular press is at hand, but this seems doubtful. As the rock disc jockeys say, the beat goes on. One can still pick up the same magazines and newspapers and find the same cheerleading reviewers and journalists feigning the old phony excitement and continuing to treat unserious things with great seriousness. These reviewers and journalists are themselves peculiarly the product of the disruptions of the 60's, the interest earned on the capital from that nihilistic period in American life off which many people will no doubt continue to live through this decade. Seen from the perspective of today, the 60's were like a tidal wave that swept over America. The wave has begun to roll back, but in its wake the shore is revealed to be littered with broken glass, burned-out fires, dead animals, and all kinds of garbage. A lengthy period will be required before the beach is cleaned up and put back into use.

Movies

Woody Allen on the American Character

Richard Grenier

WOODY ALLEN had dreamed of higher things. Having been encouraged by more adulation from the country's cultural elite than any comic artist since Charlie Chaplin, he aspired to outgrow comedy—in his chosen medium to become Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini. These ventures resulted in an almost uninterrupted string of commercial disasters, and now he has returned to us, but still trailing aspirations to "significance," with *Zelig*—an unquestioned comedy, comparatively innocuous, and funnier, at least to his devotees, than any film he has made for some time. After missing the press screening, I stood in a huge line the opening week in New York, and a young man behind me, standing on his

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tiptoes, blurted out to his friends, "Say, do you realize almost everybody in this line is Jewish?" On my second viewing, a woman in front of me in line volunteered her view, "Oh, Woody Allen's big in New York. How he does in the rest of the country, I don't know." New York, headquarters of the national press, news magazines, television networks, and publishing houses, is of course the cultural capital of America, so—whether he plays to a Jewish audience or not—Woody Allen is a far more prestigious figure than if he were the king of comedy of, let's say, St. Louis.

Zelig is constructed around a special plot device—lifted whole, in fact, from Warren Beatty's *Reds*. One of the most striking features of the Beatty film is the collection of interviews of elderly people who reminisce either about John Reed's period or about the man himself, the film's hero. These artfully edited snippets (a few seconds of screen time out of four hours of interviewing per person) give a strong, if specious, feeling of authenticity to a heavily fictionalized account of what Beatty has called, with indulgence if not overt sympathy, "the beginnings of American Communism and American Socialism." Woody Allen has now used the same device to give plausibility to an invented folk hero of the 1920's, a Brooklyn Jew named Leonard Zelig. The movie *Zelig* parades before our eyes such lofty present-day luminaries as (in order of appearance) Susan Sontag, Irving Howe, Saul Bellow, and Bruno Bettelheim, all commenting solemnly, without a detectable speck of waggishness, on a comic invention by Woody Allen, as though Zelig were a real historical personage. In the language of the trade, they have consented to appear as "straight men," mirthless, scholarly, slightly naive figures who collectively create an atmosphere of sober historicity, throwing into relief the hijinks of the star comic. Unless, of course, they have convinced themselves that this fictional Leonard Zelig—laugh though the audience may—represents some deep truth about our society, a truth the explanation of which is an enterprise perfectly consonant with their dignity.

But Sontag, Howe, Bellow, and Bettelheim are not the only people who, for the purposes of the film, "remember" Leonard Zelig. About a dozen other present-day people, some real, mostly fictional, reminisce about this legendary character, once a genuine folk hero, now strangely forgotten. These "reminiscences," combined with a steady voice-over commentary written by Woody Allen, constitute the basis of the film, giving us, in effect, Woody Allen as a writer (where he began his career) far more than Woody Allen as a performer. Allen has used this technique in a movie before. In *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* (1966), a spoof of Japanese adventure films consisting of real footage from a Japanese original, he hardly appears at all. We merely hear his comic off-camera commentary explaining, for example, that the reason a stream of assassins and murderers are after one of the film's protagonists is that he has invented the world's best egg salad. "He who makes the best egg salad controls the world!"

In *Zelig*, however, we do see Woody Allen. He appears most conspicuously in quite wonderfully done shots made to look like early newsreels or home movies. We see him with Calvin Coolidge, Jack Dempsey, Bobby Jones, William Randolph Hearst, Marion Davies, Charlie Chaplin, Jimmy Walker. Some of these fragments are from genuine archive footage (such as Hearst at San Simeon), some either cleverly spliced or simply fresh footage of Woody Allen, but shot so as fastidiously to reproduce the primitive techniques (and hackneyed commentaries) of the period. Allen, I must say, is not only done up in impeccable period dress but manages to put on period *faces*. In these snippets he really looks like someone we might see in a group shot with Calvin Coolidge. He does extremely little real acting, however, largely confined to some sessions with his woman psychiatrist (Mia Farrow).

But what, in that mad age known as the 20's, made Leonard Zelig of Brooklyn a folk hero? He was, we are told, a case unique in medical history, a "human chameleon." In the memoirs of Scott Fitzgerald, says the commentary, we read of the appearance, at one of the great Long Island parties, of a perfect aristocrat named Leonard Zelig, with the clothing, behavior, and accent appropriate to his station in life. But guests at the party are "stunned," we hear, when they see this same Zelig stroll into the mansion's kitchens and talk with the kitchen help, adopting their behavior and accent as if he were one of them. Still photographs and snips from home movies later show Zelig among gangsters, in dress, manners, and appearance every bit a gangster. Next among black jazz musicians. Here something more extraordinary occurs. His skin color changes. He becomes, if not black, at least somewhat darker-skinned. Among Chinese, he becomes Chinese. Among fat people, fat. Most of this earns great guffaws of laughter from the audience, mostly at the absurdity of seeing their own nebbish Woody Allen appear—with some verisimilitude—as a gangster, an aristocrat, a black, a Chinese, or whatever.

Zelig is immediately a subject of fascination to the psychiatric profession. Under the care of Dr. Eudora Fletcher (Miss Farrow), the human chameleon takes himself to be, like Dr. Fletcher, a psychiatrist—which gives Allen the opportunity for some psychiatric jokes. "I broke with Freud over penis envy," he says. "Freud thought it was limited to women." And later: "I'm treating two sets of Siamese twins. I'm being paid by eight people!" And then: "I have to go now. I'm giving a course in masturbation. And if I'm not there they'll start without me!" Later, under hypnosis by the same Dr. Fletcher, he says drowsily: "I had a dream when I was twelve years old in which I asked a rabbi the meaning of life. He told me the meaning of life in Hebrew. But I don't understand Hebrew. Then he asked me for $600 for Hebrew lessons." Again under hypnosis, he reveals to Dr. Fletcher while under treatment at a sanatorium in the country: "I hate the country. I hate the grass. Your cooking is terrible. I dump your pancakes in the garbage when you're not looking. I love you.

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You're a terrible cook. I love you. Please, no more pancakes." This is a fair sampling of the movie's humor, although, to be fair, what with Allen's timing and good delivery, the lines are somewhat funnier in the film than in print.

For reasons that are not exactly clear, Leonard Zelig—who is after all only some kind of natural freak—becomes a giant national hero, as famous, Miss Sontag tells us, as Charles Augustus Lindbergh. But the film, of course, has a second act. In it Leonard Zelig, after marrying Dr. Fletcher, is revealed as having married several other ladies, including a black woman he told he was the brother of Duke Ellington. Zelig is driven from the country by the equivalent of what Allen clearly intends to be the counterpart of the present Moral Majority and is discovered in Nazi Germany as (what else?) a Nazi. Brought to his senses by Dr. Fletcher (Act 3), he escapes from Germany by plane, "setting a record for flying non-stop across the Atlantic upside down." Given a hero's welcome in New York, Zelig declares before the period microphones: "It just shows what you can do if you're a total psychotic!"

After his breathtaking escape from the Nazis, we are told in the film's final frames that Zelig's "malady gradually disappears" and that he dies, at last, regretting only that he would now never finish *Moby-Dick*, which at the onset of his malady he pretended he had read.

IF THE choice of a "human chameleon" as a popular hero seems psychologically wrong, even for a comedy (who admires chameleons?), the choice seems even more perverse when compared with the career of another Jew from Brooklyn whose real-life story is revealed at a dozen points to have originally suggested the Woody Allen fiction. Stephen Jacob Weinberg, otherwise known as S. Clifford Weinberg, Ethan Allen Weinberg, Rodney S. Wyman, Sterling C. Wyman, Stanley Clifford Weyman, Allen Stanley Weyman, C. Sterling Weinberg, and Royal St. Cyr, was the greatest impostor of the age. His feats seem breathtaking even today, and he became a true popular hero, the darling of the multitudes. Anyone who questions the extent of his fame can only reflect that a new feat of Weinberg's got more space in the New York press of the day than the funeral ceremonies of Rudolf Valentino.

In fact, as it turned out, Weinberg was directing the funeral ceremonies of Rudolf Valentino. It all happened in what was for Weinberg a perfectly natural way. He read in his modest home on Metropolitan Avenue in Brooklyn that Valentino had died and that Pola Negri, his paramour, chief mourner, and a giant star in her own right, had arrived at the Hotel Ambassador for the services. Weinberg simply took the subway from Brooklyn, sailed into Pola Negri's suite with that combination of aplomb, charm, and confidence that all who saw him in action reported was truly astounding, and said, "Rudy would have wanted me to take care of you, my dear." He next offered his services to Valentino's manager as public-relations director (identifying himself now as "Miss Negri's personal physician"), and the constant briefings to the press throughout the entire Valentino funeral services, demonstrations, and riots were conducted by Stephen Weinberg. Until, that is, one of the newsmen recognized him. It was Weinberg! The Great Impostor! The Great Impostor has struck again! At which point, Weinberg became a bigger story than Valentino. Pola Negri, informed that "Dr. Weyman" was not the genuine article, declared defiantly that she didn't care, and that he was the best doctor she'd ever had.

ONE of Weinberg's most celebrated stunts was his introduction into the White House of Princess Fatima of Afghanistan. Sitting in Brooklyn, he read of the diplomatic difficulties. The British empire did not at the time recognize Afghanistan as a sovereign state and had persuaded Washington not to receive even Kabul's officially designated chief of mission. Meanwhile, Princess Fatima was languishing at the old Waldorf-Astoria in New York and Weinberg (for the moment Captain Wyman) presented himself to her as the "State Department Navy Liaison Officer." Stephen Weinberg—it was clear to everyone who ever had contact with him—was a man of remarkable gifts. He took on the State Department (who thought he was from the Navy). He took on the Navy (who thought he was from the State Department). He took on the White House. He took on the British empire. And before long he and his protégée, Princess Fatima, were received at the White House by President Warren G. Harding. The Washington *Post* gave the event full coverage, with respectful notice for Captain Wyman, who "interpreted" for Princess Fatima (from *Afghan?*), not failing to note Princess Fatima's exotic royal costume "bearing a close resemblance to the present harem boudoir gowns."

Weinberg's escapades seem endless. When the flagship of the Atlantic fleet was moored in the Hudson, he hired a motor launch and, dressed in a uniform of his own devising, presented himself to the U.S. fleet commander as the Consul General of Rumania. The admiral enjoyed his company so much that he had a 21-gun salute fired in his honor. When a world-famous Austrian surgeon arrived in New York, "Dr. Weyman" went down to the ship to greet him, saying he had been sent by the New York Health Commissioner to assist him with arrangements during his stay. Weyman was so charming and efficient that, when he was exposed as an impostor, Dr. Adolf Lorenz, also, refused to give him up. So what if Weyman wasn't a doctor? He was the best special assistant Lorenz had ever had.

Presenting himself as a U.S. Navy doctor, Weinberg got himself engaged at one time as Director of Sanitation of Lima, Peru, and became a great hit in Peruvian society. He served for a year and a half, and if Lima's sanitation suffered, no one ever found him out. Doing a stretch in the state penitentiary in Atlanta, Weinberg, with time on his hands, studied law, passed the bar examination, and was admitted to the bar in the State of Georgia. His knowledge of the law increased his earning power and, back in New York, he was soon driving about in his Pierce

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Arrow, Mercedes, and Daimler automobiles equipped with plates marked "Special Deputy Attorney General" (an authentic post he obtained for himself) and, later, official license plates of the New York City Police Department (equally authentic). He sometimes traveled accompanied by a genuine police motorcade. Then he would be at it again, passing himself off as someone he was not, such as the Consul General from Algiers. His favorite roles tended to be diplomatic, medical, and military (navy, army, or air).

At the time of the famous first crossing of the Atlantic by air from east to west (the hard way), an event the press of the day was covering with almost the same hysteria as Lindbergh's crossing in the opposite direction eleven months earlier, Weinberg had another of his shining hours. The "Bremen Fliers," as they were called (Baron Gunther von Huenfelt, Major James Fitzmaurice, and Captain Hermann Koehl), were being welcomed in New York by the city's official "greeter," Grover Whalen—when Whalen suddenly found himself shouldered aside in the middle of his welcome speech by a Captain Stanley Wyman of the "United States Volunteer Air Service," who announced he had been sent by Mayor Jimmy Walker personally to welcome the Bremen Fliers to New York. Wyman made an eloquent speech himself, then with the help of police expelled all "unauthorized" people from the room, and the afternoon papers were filled with pictures of the Bremen Fliers and their host, Captain Wyman. In the evening, in the city rooms of New York's morning papers, editors noticed that Captain Stanley Wyman of the U.S. Volunteer Air Service and Dr. Sterling C. Wyman, Pola Negri's personal physician, bore more than a passing resemblance. It was Weinberg. The devil had done it again. Dr. Phyllis Greenacre, a leading contemporary authority on the relationship of the impostor and the artist, wrote solemnly of the impostor's "ego hunger" and "need for completion." Psychiatrists have given deep thought to the case of Stephen Weinberg.

It is worth noting that Weinberg was never found out or thought ungenuine in any way by the object of his impostures, from Warren G. Harding to Pola Negri to the participants in a national conference of medical and psychological professionals—before whom, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, presenting himself as a member of the New York State Lunacy Commission, he gave a lecture on reform of psychiatric treatment in prisons which was extremely well received. Weinberg would be undone, usually well after the fact, by some detail from his past cropping up. Toward the end of his brilliant career as an impostor he had become such a celebrity in his own right that he was often spotted by some newsman. *It's Weinberg! He's done it again!* Interestingly, although he would put on a uniform with gold braid at the drop of a hat, Weinberg never made any attempt to disguise his appearance. He was good-looking, wearing the hairline mustache considered "distinguished" at the time, charming, intelligent. With his quite extraordinary ability to get people to like and trust him, not to mention his wiliness and audacity, everyone who has studied Weinberg's case agrees that if he had been sane enough to settle on a single, legitimate career and stay with it (politics? diplomacy? real-estate promoter?) he was likely to have been a great success.

It is fairly obvious why Weinberg, in his time, became such a popular hero. He was appealing, cunning, intrepid beyond belief. He "cocked a snoot" at authority, yet shared—one might say to a pathological degree—a desire held by millions of his countrymen: to "rise," to be eminent. For Weinberg, unlike Woody Allen's Zelig, had no desire at all to be taken for a member of the kitchen staff. His goals, in strict accordance with the behavior of the classic mythomane, were entirely self-aggrandizing. The roles he chose for himself were always persons of conspicuously high status. Which was the fun of it all. Who, in the 20's, would have thrilled at the idea of a clever Brooklyn Jew managing to pass himself off as a Negro or a Chinese?

Another part of Weinberg's popularity was also due, no doubt, to the fact that he never did anyone real harm. For another profession for which Weinberg's gifts might seem to have destined him was that of swindler. But, barring a little financial squabbling at the end of his relationship with Princess Fatima, Weinberg never used his specious eminence and wondrous skill at the old flimflam to enrich himself. When he came into money (through real-estate transactions, interestingly enough), he would spend it like water, all on display.

Stephen Weinberg was, in fact, characteristic enough of his age—but certainly not for being a human chameleon. He wanted fame, glory, august position. His only problem was that, although an honor student at Brooklyn's Eastern District High School with a gold medal in his pocket for debating, he was psychotic and could never quite grasp that he would have to accomplish all this "on the legit," more or less, and instead would attempt the shortest of all possible short-cuts. Then again, there were those who felt that Stephen Jacob Weinberg was not, after all, a failure, but that his impostures were among the most sublime and entertaining art works of the age.

Much written about in the 20's, and even the 30's, Weinberg was eventually forgotten—the fate of many another popular artist thrown up by the *Zeitgeist* (where are you now, Theda Bara? Clara Bow?). And I owe to St. Clair McKelway's book, *The Big Little Man From Brooklyn* (Houghton Mifflin, 1969), awareness that Stephen Weinberg's life, like Woody Allen's movie, had a second, and even a third, act. In the early 50's another impostor, Mike Romanoff, was running a hugely successful restaurant in Hollywood, and in New York, Dinty Moore's, at the time another great celebrity hang-out, hired as its greeter—without having the faintest idea who he was—a certain Stanley Clifford Weyman. As charming as ever, Weinberg, over sixty now, was an instant success with the customers. After only a few weeks, Dinty Moore's daughter,

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then in active charge of the restaurant, offered to raise his salary, at which point Weinberg, whom the years had mellowed, confessed that he had been in prison many times and was, in fact, the notorious impostor from Brooklyn. Miss Moore was astonished, and afraid of alarming Dinty Moore's customers. But Weinberg's ability to get people to like him worked once again. She implored him to stay, merely keeping his identity secret. In this period, during which Weinberg seemed to view life, and himself, with a wry humor, he impressed great numbers of customers with his intelligence, knowledgeability, and tact. The editor-in-chief of a well-known national magazine found him a highly intelligent luncheon companion, and had long conversations with him on any number of subjects.

Then, having been the Great Impostor of the 20's, largely forgotten by the 40's, and resurrected with a curious kind of respectability as an attractive greeter at a world-famous restaurant in the 50's, Stephen Weinberg lived into still another age—and a very different one—the 60's. One day, with no forewarning, he told Miss Moore that he wanted to resign to become the night manager of a modern motel on Yonkers Avenue in Yonkers. She implored him to stay, offered to raise his salary. But no. He wanted more time "to think," he said. He worked for about a year at the Dunwoodie Motel on Yonkers Avenue, when, in the middle of the night of August 27, 1960, two gunmen walked in and shot him dead. Reconstructing the crime afterward, and noting the position of the cashbox and the body, detectives could reach only one conclusion. Weinberg had thrown the cashbox to the floor as a distraction and then, at the age of seventy, vaulted over the counter to attack the two gunmen barehanded. "He did a lot of things in the course of his life," said a detective, "but what he did this time was brave." So Stephen Weinberg, the Great Impostor, he who had shaken the hand of Warren G. Harding and embraced Pola Negri, gave up his life at seventy defending a motel cashbox in Yonkers.

WALKING out of a public screening of *Zelig*, I heard a young woman in front of me say to her male companion, "You know, Irving Howe is right. The 20's was really an age of conformity."

Now this is not what Irving Howe said. But it is, in a sense, the "message" of the film. It was in order to convey this message that Woody Allen transformed the dashing if psychotic Stephen Weinberg into the wormlike chameleon Leonard Zelig—who, in my view, under no possible circumstances could have become the hero of multitudes but only a side-show freak, above all in the 20's. But the notion of the 20's as a *conformist* period is also somewhat staggering. The Jazz Age? Speakeasies? Flappers? Stock-market manipulations and real-estate swindles probably never matched before or since? The Saint Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago? The decade which brought about a revolution in daily dress, utterly demolished the genteel tradition, and established the popular arts in the position of utter dominance they still enjoy? Of course, it was a decade in which, despite enormous social change and the best efforts of Big Bill Haywood, European ideologies like Marxism did not take hold and the country remained firmly capitalist—and it is perhaps this that Woody Allen would understand as "conformist." Or quite possibly, by analogy with the Eisenhower years in the 50's, Allen simply thinks that any period under Republican administrations must be conformist. I have pointed out before that Woody Allen hasn't taken in many new ideas since the 50's, and the ancestor work for his *Zelig* might after all really be David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), with its emphasis on the "other-directed" personality type.

BUT perhaps it is a mistake to overanalyze *Zelig*, which is, after all, "only a comedy." On the other hand, there is a puzzle. In addition to the other eminent figures I have already mentioned, we also have SS Obergruppenfuehrer Oswald Pohl, commenting on Leonard Zelig during his Nazi phase. Now Oswald Pohl (and very few viewers can be expected to know this) was one of Heinrich Himmler's deputies, director of economic administration of the entire *Schutzstaffel* (SS). Artistic license also comes into play here since Pohl was condemned to death at Nuremberg on November 3, 1947, and executed on June 8, 1951, so his role is played by an actor. Still, Jews like Irving Howe, Susan Sontag, Bruno Bettelheim, and Saul Bellow offering their wise interpretations of a Woody Allen fiction in tandem with a convicted Nazi war criminal dedicated to the extermination of just such Jews—surely there is some exquisitely refined joke here. But it is one which Woody Allen will have to explain to me, since, try as I may, I cannot get myself to laugh at SS Obergruppenfuehrer Pohl, who, literally, supervised the melting down of gold teeth taken from the bodies of victims of Hitler's gas chambers. In Woody Allen's view, Pohl might well be a hilarious figure but, explain it as you will, he simply does not tickle my funny bone.

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A Celebration

OVERDRIVE: A PERSONAL DOCUMENTARY. By WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR. *Doubleday. 262 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by NORMAN PODHORETZ

THE first thing to say about *Overdrive* is that it is a dazzling book. The second thing to say is that it has generally been greeted with extreme hostility. Are we dealing here, then, with the drearily familiar case of a literary injustice perpetrated for political reasons? On the face of it, certainly, that would seem to be a plausible inference. After all, William F. Buckley, Jr. is famous for holding political opinions that are very unpopular with most of the people who review books in this country, and those opinions are richly in evidence in *Overdrive*. To be sure, the hostile reviews have not explicitly attacked *Overdrive* on political grounds, but reviewers who object to an author's politics nowadays know enough to attack his literary or scholarly equipment instead. "I have *never* understood the point in disparaging the *skills* of your adversaries," Buckley writes in an earlier book. "That sort of thing shouldn't go beyond Virginia Kirkus and the Donald Duck school of literary criticism, or at the other end, John Birch." No doubt it shouldn't, but it does, so great is the power of the dogma that an author must be granted what Henry James called his *donnée* and that a critic is therefore only entitled to pass judgment on his powers of execution. (Of course this not only leads to disparaging the skills of adversaries; it also leads conversely to exaggerating the skills of allies, a sin of which Buckley himself is often guilty.)

Yet repugnant though Buckley's conservatism undoubtedly is to his critics, I do not believe that the injustice done to *Overdrive* can be explained in strictly political terms. Something deeper and more interesting is at work here.

Like *Cruising Speed* (1971) before it, *Overdrive* is an account of a single, and presumably typical, week in Buckley's life. Everything he does or that happens to him in the course of that week is recorded, along with such background information or reminiscence as is needed to make the present moment fully intelligible. The form, in other words, is a journal, but one that differs from the usual journal in being frankly and deliberately written for publication.

The epithet Buckley uses to describe this form is "documentary," which suggests a movie or a television program; and indeed, what he gives us here—another difference from most journals—is more action than introspection. He himself says at one point that he has never developed the habit of introspection: "The unexamined life may not be worth living, in which case I will concede that mine is not worth living." Having made this extraordinary confession, he quickly adds: "But excepting my own life, I do seek to examine, and certainly I dilate upon, public questions I deem insufficiently examined." So he does—through *National Review*, the magazine he has been editing for more than twenty-five years; through the syndicated column he has been writing for about twenty years; through *Firing Line*, the television program he has been moderating for about fifteen years; through the nineteen books and innumerable articles he has produced over the past thirty-five years; and through the two hundred or so lectures he delivers every year.

In addition, Buckley carries on an enormous correspondence (he gets about 600 letters a week and seems to answer most of them), sits on committees, entertains and is entertained practically every night by friends and acquaintances, spends six weeks every year skiing in Gstaad and another month or so crossing the Atlantic or some other body of water in a sailboat.

All this activity comes into *Overdrive*, as it also did into *Cruising Speed*. But *Overdrive* (subtitled "A Personal Documentary" whereas *Cruising Speed* was only a "A Documentary") zooms in much more frequently on the material circumstances in which Buckley lives his unexamined life. There is the big house in Connecticut which is not only on the water but also contains "the most beautiful indoor pool this side of Pompeii." There is his marvelous 36-foot sloop which seems "to ice-skate over the waves." There is the outsize limousine driven by the perfect chauffeur (one of a host of equally perfect servants) to carry him from Connecticut to his apartment on East 73rd Street in New York, where the furnishings and the appointments would also be at home in Pompeii.

Buckley's social environs are no less richly furnished than his material environment. He throws a party for *National Review*'s twenty-fifth anniversary "at which everyone was present *except* Reagan." But the President, an old friend and a charter subscriber to his magazine, is still in frequent touch, and Buckley goes to the theater with the First Lady, which means "no tickets to buy, or crowds to thread through." When he goes to the ballet, it is as a guest of Joe and Estee Lauder (of cosmetics fame), after which they all have dinner at the home of Ahmet Ertegun ("He either owns the Rolling Stones, or else they own him, something of the sort"). Heads of major corporations fly in from all over the country to attend a lunch at his New York apartment, and when the guest of honor, the Vice President of the United States, is unable to make it at the last minute, the U.S. ambassador to the UN cancels another appointment to fill in. A great lover of music, Buckley not only numbers the eminent Bach specialist Rosalyn Tureck among his friends but is able to get her to perform privately for him at home both on the piano and the harpsichord, which harpsichord has been given to him by another close musical friend, the great virtuoso Fer-

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NORMAN PODHORETZ *is the editor of* COMMENTARY. *His most recent book,* Why We Were in Vietnam, *has recently been issued (with a new postscript) in paperback by Touchstone.*

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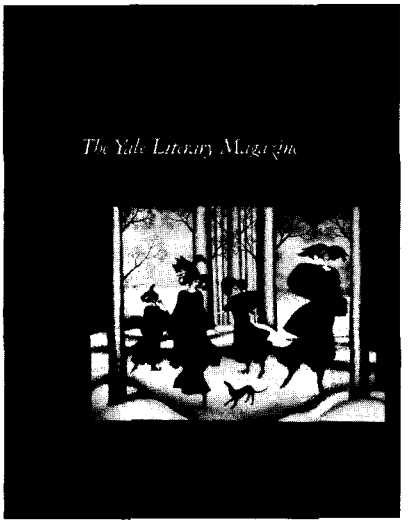

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When *The Yale Literary Magazine* was founded, Beethoven was completing the *Missa Solemnis*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* appeared, and Emerson began his *Journal*. The names of a few authors we have published since then — Rudyard Kipling, Sinclair Lewis, Stephen Vincent Benét, Thornton Wilder, John Dos Passos — show that some of our judgments have been quite timely.

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nando Valente. An ailing David Niven (who has since died) spends the weekend with him in Connecticut along with the current U.S. ambassador to France, Evan Galbraith, whose only relation to his namesake, the famous economist, is that they are both Buckley's pals.

As is evident from his friendship with John Kenneth Galbraith, Buckley is not limited to fellow conservatives for companionship. Norman Mailer has breakfast at his apartment after they have debated on a morning TV show, and on the way out they are nearly run over by Senator Daniel P. Moynihan's station wagon ("Damn," says Moynihan, whose wit has something in common with Buckley's, "I could have gotten you both with one swipe," to which Buckley without missing a beat replies that "Norman had already been killed once that morning").

Nor, finally, are only the famous and the powerful admitted into Buckley's social circle. Many people make appearances in *Overdrive* who are neither movers nor shakers but who still command Buckley's regard and affection—professional colleagues, relatives, acquaintances out of the distant past.

THE material is fascinating in itself, and all Buckley's virtues as a writer are called forth in the recording of it. The prose flows smoothly and elegantly, its formality tempered with colloquial touches that somehow never jar, its mischievous wit coexisting in surprisingly comfortable congruence with its high rhetorical solemnities, its narrative pace sure-footed enough to accommodate detours and flashbacks without losing the necessary forward momentum.

In general, there is so much humor, exuberance, and energy in this book that it is hard to believe Buckley when he says at one point that he dislikes writing. The relish with which he writes certainly seems to belie him, as his own "voluptuous fecundity" (to borrow a phrase he uses somewhere of someone else) seems to belie his statement that he finds writing "extremely hard work." Of course many (most?) writers dislike writing and find it very hard to do, but most writers cannot turn out pieces in twenty minutes (which is about what it takes Buckley to do a column) or compose anywhere they happen to be located or that they are on the way to, whether in an automobile, an airplane, or a sailboat.

If he denies the relish with which he writes, however, Buckley revels in the relish with which he lives. Here I must quote the historian Garry Wills, who began as a contributor to *National Review* and eventually drifted even farther to the Left than he once was on the Right (thinking of Wills and two other *National Review* alumni, the literary critic John Leonard and the dance critic Arlene Croce, Buckley notes: "For a while I thought we were running a finishing school for apostates"). Wills has rightly said that Buckley is "in love with life," and that his "gift for appreciation is the greatest of his many talents." What indeed (with the surprising exception of ballet) does Buckley *not* appreciate? His worship of Bach goes to the edge of idolatry and possibly beyond, but he also adores his Smith-Corona electric portable typewriter and a special brand of peanut butter he has discovered that is *even* better than Skippy ("It is quite simply incomparable. Charlton Heston, who had sent me a jar of *his* favorite stuff, just plain surrendered when I introduced him to Red Wing").

Of his Connecticut home he writes:

> My wife and I know what it is to learn to love a piece of property wholly; defiantly; truculently, even. . . . We'll always be here, then, in the warm summers when the leaves make invisible the houses of our neighbors to the south and north; in the spiky fall season, days like today with the little chill that makes one feel freshly laundered; and in the truly cold cold of the cold days. . . .

Thus the country. And here is a weekday morning in the city:

> I have read the newspapers and breakfasted in the beautiful, cloistered, red-red library Pat has so ingeniously decorated and then, in my dressing gown, I climb up the stairs to my little study, which incidentally looks out, between 8 and 8:30, on the handsomest, gayest, most cheerful parade of children aged six to twelve, the youngest of them accompanied by nurses or governesses, all of them carrying sackfuls of books, bouncing off to the multifarious schools concentrated in the area.

If his awareness of these fixed blessings never seems to lose its sharpness for Buckley, he is equally ready to appreciate the transient pleasures of the day. Going out to lunch, he reflects: "It is hard to devise a happier couple with whom to share lunch than Priscilla Buckley and Joe Sobran." Staying in for lunch, he eats "the perfect chicken sandwich" brought to him by a servant and washes it down "with a glass of cool white wine." And so it goes, hour after hour, day after day, with this "blasphemously happy" man who is in love with the life he leads.

In commending Buckley for this, Wills makes a point of distinguishing between being in love with life (good) and being in love with one's own life (bad). To be in love with life, Wills explains (paraphrasing Chesterton), is to "have the energy to give things their proper response of stunned gratitude or generous combat." Yes, but the "things" in question are in the first place one's own circumstances, and if these should include great luxuries of every kind, gratitude for them is not only proper but (being so hard to sustain) requires even more energy than is needed for greeting the unexpected. And that Buckley should so appreciate the privileges his wealth has brought is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that he was born rich and could so easily have taken it all for granted or pretended hypocritically to dissatisfaction, or actually felt dissatisfaction. (The talmudic maxim, "Who is rich? He that is content with his lot," applies as much to the rich themselves, especially those with inherited wealth, as to the poor.)

I FOR ONE, then, do not doubt that the delight Buckley takes in his privileges is an exemplary spiritual virtue. If I do have a doubt, it concerns the extent of this delight. I mean, is he *always* so cheerful? Does he never suffer from anxiety?

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Does he never experience chagrin? Surely he must, and yet there is no sign in this book (or in any of the other books he has written in a similar mode) that he does. All light and no shadow by no means makes *Overdrive* a dull book, but it does tend to undermine Buckley's spiritual achievement (much as, for example, the courage of Wagner's Siegfried is morally compromised by the fact that he has never known fear).

A similar problem arises in connection with Buckley's appreciation of his friends. He is so good at delivering tributes that one would choose him above all others (well, perhaps not above Daniel P. Moynihan) to deliver the eulogy at one's own funeral, or better still, the speech in one's honor on some appropriate occasion. There are samples of both kinds of speeches in *Overdrive* and they are, without exception, masterpieces of the extremely difficult art of praise. Yet as one character after another parades through these pages sumptuously garlanded with hyperbolic tributes, one's trust begins to falter. Are all his friends and acquaintances really so wonderful?

Here, as it happens, knowing some of the same people he does, I am in a position to check him out, and I can say categorically of several cases that one of us is blind —either I to the brilliance or he to the dross. Nor is my confidence in the reliability of his judgment strengthened when an American woman we have both met and whose features are unmistakably Occidental is described in *Overdrive* as a "beautiful Oriental." Obviously Buckley has never *looked* at this woman; therefore his appreciation of her is not a sign of "the energy to give things their proper response," but rather of the opposite—of carelessness and inattention. Like the literary critic who indiscriminately dispenses extravagant blurbs (Buckley himself does this, for example, when he calls a piece of perfunctory hack work like Wilfrid Sheed's book about Clare Boothe Luce a "work of art"), he not only inflates the currency of appreciation with his unvarying words of praise for the people around him, but raises questions about the steadiness of his capacity for a "proper response."

The same tendency toward carelessness and inattention has been visible in some of Buckley's recent public performances. On *Firing Line*, he no longer seems as sharp as he once did; often he even strikes one as ill- or hastily prepared (a suspicion for which there is some evidence in *Overdrive*). He was even more slapdash and somnolent as commentator for the television adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, making the excellent work Alistair Cooke does along the same lines for Masterpiece Theater look even better by contrast. What this suggests is that Buckley's ability to accomplish so much is no longer a manifestation of the energy he once commanded by virtue of his extraordinary alertness, but is beginning to be maintained at the expense of just such alertness.

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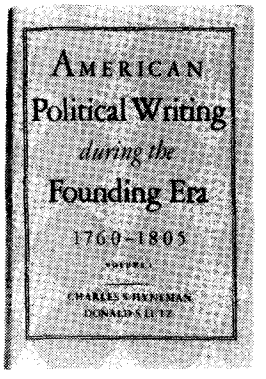

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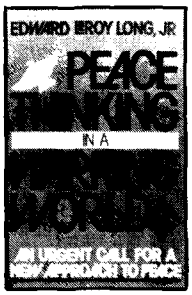

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This failing, however, is least visible in Buckley's prose, which has never been wittier, more pointed, more charged with electricity than it is in *Overdrive*. And it is not in any case Buckley's failings that account for the ridicule which has been heaped on *Overdrive*. On the contrary: far from being troubled by doubts about the full authenticity of Buckley's celebration of his own life, the critics seem to have been offended by the very fact that he celebrates it at all. To experience and express gratitude for one's blessings may be a virtue in the eyes of Buckley's Christian faith (and of Judaism as well), but it is not a virtue in the eyes of contemporary American culture, where dissatisfaction with one's lot is the mandatory spiritual state and obstreperous whining the prescribed form of prayer. It is sinful enough, by the standards of this perverse pietism, to be happy, especially if one is rich, but the sinner should at least have the decency to shut up about it and not publish it in Gath.

In this decency Buckley is even more outrageously lacking than he is in the correlative political attitudes. Thus at the very end of *Overdrive*, dining at home with his *National Review* colleagues, Buckley is moved to the following reflection:

> . . . if there were nothing to complain about, there would be no post-Adamite mankind. But complaint is profanation in the absence of gratitude. There is much to complain about in America, but that awful keening noise one unhappily gets so used to makes no way for the bells, and these have rung for America, are still ringing for America, and for this we are *obliged* to be grateful. To be otherwise is wrong reason, and a poetical invitation to true national tribulation. I must remember to pray more often, because providence has given us the means to make the struggle, and in this respect we are singularly blessed in this country, and in this room.

To my mind, the only "proper response" to such a passage is Amen. But it is not surprising that those who both make and applaud "that awful keening noise" should have been moved instead to curses, contumely, and scorn.

Trashing Sadat

AUTUMN OF FURY: THE ASSASSINATION OF SADAT. By MOHAMED HEIKAL. *Random House. 290 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by DANIEL PIPES

MOHAMED HEIKAL, the renowned Egyptian journalist, writes on the first page of *Autumn of Fury* that he was "very fond of Sadat as a man." The reader might wish to savor these pleasant words, for they are the last he will encounter. Heikal pursues two thoroughly negative themes in this book: that all Egypt's current problems result from President Anwar Sadat's mistaken policies; and that Sadat's assassination in October 1981 followed inevitably from his errors.

Heikal condemns every one of Sadat's major policies, including the expulsion of the Russian advisers in 1972, economic liberalization in 1974, and peace with Israel in 1977. His basic difference with the President, however, concerns the aftermath of the war in October 1973. He vehemently disagrees with Sadat's strategy of pursuing a limited war to lay the ground for permanent peace, arguing that this missed a great opportunity. Had Sadat coordinated actions with Syria, Libya, and the oil states, the Arabs would have been in a position to confront Israel. Instead, Sadat "was not really interested in exploiting the initial victories of Egyptian arms, . . . what Sadat wanted to do as quickly as possible was to get in touch with the Americans and arrange matters with them." The result, Heikal contends, was a shift toward the United States that did Egypt great harm.

But criticism of Sadat's international policy is less damning than charges relating to domestic affairs. These, drawn from Heikal's insider knowledge of Egyptian politics—he

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DANIEL PIPES, *a lecturer in history at Harvard, lived three years in Egypt during the Sadat era. His book* In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power *will be published later this month by Basic Books. He contributed "How Important Is the PLO?" to our April issue.*

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claims to have been "closer to [Sadat] than anyone else . . . for the first four years of his Presidency"—touch on virtually every aspect of Sadat's rule. Sadat arrested the loyal opposition and mishandled the growing Islamic and Coptic movements. He tolerated corruption among his family and cronies. He repeatedly took priceless Egyptian antiquities off display at the Egyptian Museum and gave them to foreign friends. Once a year he personally supervised "a bonfire in which all papers he thought would be better forgotten were destroyed"—papers dealing with the disbursement of secret funds and transcriptions of telephone conversations.

These accusations, set out in great detail, constitute the bulk of the book. Here, substantiating the charge that Sadat was self-indulgent and isolated, is an account of the President's daily routine:

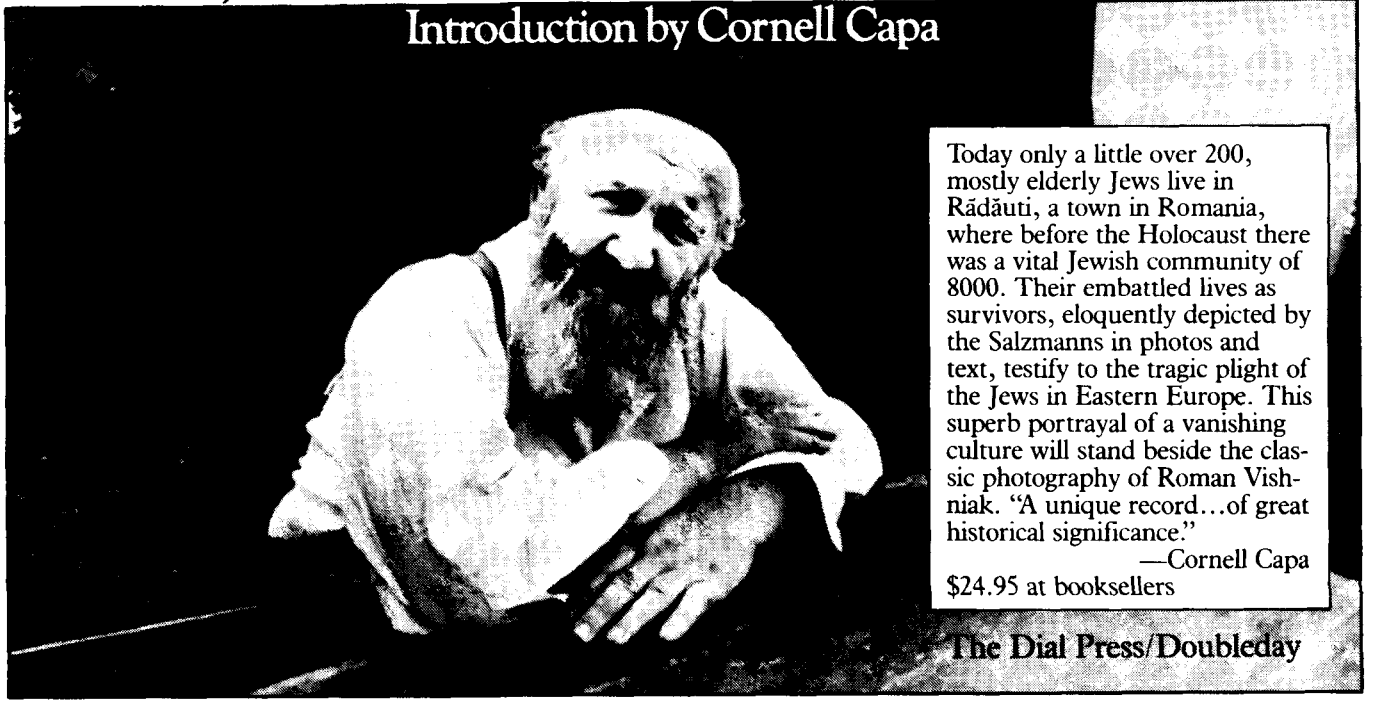
> He usually woke up late, between 9:00 and 9:30, and on waking would be given a spoonful of mixed honey and royal jelly and a cup of tea. He would read the papers in bed, paying particular attention to all the items concerning himself. Then came massage from his personal masseur, some physical exercises, and a bath. This would be followed by a light breakfast, consisting probably of a piece of cheese and some calorie-free toast (all his cereal requirements were made from calorie-free flour imported from Switzerland—even his sweet pastry *kunafa*). Sadat had found that vodka was a helpful stimulant . . . two or three vodkas would be taken, so that by 12:00 or 12:30 he was ready for the day's interviews and appointments. After a couple of hours of this he would be complaining of the burden of business ("They are killing me with work") and would adjourn with a friend for perhaps some more vodka, followed by a light lunch of cold chicken or meat and salad. At about 4:30 he would retire to bed and sleep soundly till 7:00 or 7:30, when he would wake hungry. A mint tea would be followed by dinner, . . . then there would be talks with some officials or telephone conversations with foreign politicians and Cairo editors. At around 9:00 he would ask to be given a list of films that were available (all films . . . were sent to the President before being passed to the censor), and by 10:00 he would be watching the first film in his private cinema.

Most of what Heikal writes in *Autumn of Fury* is new and much of it is damning. But is it true? The absence of documentation—only a handful of footnotes and almost no attributions—makes it impossible independently to verify Heikal's assertions. The credibility of *Autumn of Fury* depends entirely on the veracity of the author. Is he candid about his objectives or does he have hidden motives? Do his facts match those in the public record and are his judgments trustworthy? For Heikal's charges to stick, he must

The Last Jews of Rădăuţi

Text by Ayşe Gürsan-Salzmann Photographs by Laurence Salzmann

Introduction by Cornell Capa



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be above suspicion and his reliability must be established.

He fails both tests. The ostensible purpose of the book is to explain to Westerners the events leading up to Sadat's assassination. But the real purpose is quite different; to revive the memory of Sadat's predecessor, Gamal Abdul Nasser. Heikal rose to prominence as Nasser's personal confidant, and for many years he served as the Egyptian government's spokesman. Today, as the most visible and articulate keeper of the Nasserist legacy, his abiding desire is to reinstate Nasser's reputation and policies.

For this reason, each mention of Nasser in this book is uncritical—no, lyrical: "Nasser achieved so much that he created dreams which were incapable of achievement." Contrary to all evidence, Heikal celebrates Egypt under Nasser as a socialist country "in fact as well as in name." He overstates success (claiming the Aswan Dam was "one of the greatest technological achievements of the age") and breezily dismisses major failures ("Israel and democracy remained his stumbling blocks").

But the key to redeeming Nasser's name is to blacken that of his successor; every act by Sadat is portrayed in the worst possible light. Heikal implies that the abandonment of Nasser's policies of socialism, neutralism, and pan-Arabism explains Egypt's present woes. The economic opening of Egypt in 1974 ended the effort to build a socialist economy and paved the way for maldistribution of income and massive corruption. The rejection of neutralism made Egypt a ward of the U.S., dependent on it for political cues and handouts. The emphasis on Egyptian nationalism led to the loss of Arab support, both economic and political. Because he is building a case, Heikal neglects to mention that Egypt is today less militaristic, more democratic, richer, and freer than under Nasser.

Where others see greatness, Heikal finds fault. Courage and vision had no role in Sadat's decision to go to Jerusalem in November 1977. Rather, this was a political maneuver to escape domestic economic problems, nothing more: "There is a direct link between the food riots in January 1977 and the Jerusalem journey in November." Similarly, Sadat's loyalty to the fallen Shah of Iran is made to look not noble but merely foolish (because it alienated the new regime in Teheran).

HEIKAL also fails in the matter of accuracy. Those much closer to Sadat than he have categorically denounced this book as unreliable. Hermann Eilts, U.S. ambassador to Egypt from 1973 to 1979, says he found "well over 100 factual errors" in *Autumn of Fury*. Husni Mubarak, Vice President of Egypt through most of Sadat's rule (and now President), said the book includes "events which I myself witnessed. They are inaccurate and untrue. I do not wish to mention the events. I do not like to talk about these topics. I just want to say that they contain untrue stories, far from the truth."

Even persons not privy to the inner councils of Sadat's government can see for themselves the faults of *Autumn of Fury*, for it distorts matters of public record. Some errors are tangential to the argument: calorie-free flour? Not even the Swiss can do that. Contrary to what Heikal reports, the Israelis have never demanded the expulsion of the Murabitun militia from Lebanon "on the grounds that they represent a threat to Israel's security." The author contradicts himself from one passage to another. We read on one page that King Hassan of Morocco met the Prime Minister of Israel in April 1977; but two pages later, in the course of describing a meeting in September 1977, Heikal says that "King Hassan had from time to time met Israelis, but never one quite so highly placed as [Foreign Minister Moshe] Dayan."

Major errors abound. In the account of events leading up to the Jerusalem trip, Heikal omits the critical joint U.S.-Soviet statement of October 1, 1977. How can one believe his narrative on less-known matters? He says that Jimmy Carter

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was "of course delighted" by Sadat's trip; anyone who watched television that day will remember the President's dour reaction as he came out of church. Heikal's description of the Camp David accords is so distorted, the accords are almost unrecognizable: "Egypt was bound to supply Israel with two million tons of oil every year. In return what had the Israelis conceded? Virtually nothing." The return of the Sinai peninsula was "virtually nothing"?

FINALLY, on matters of interpretation, Heikal displays an extreme political viewpoint. On the one hand, he dismisses as "an implausible story" documented accounts of Qaddafi's wanting to assassinate Sadat. On the other hand, he seriously considers the notion that the CIA arranged for Sadat's assassination, deciding against this explanation only because "Sadat's regime was still able to serve American interests in the Middle East." Heikal implies that Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi would never dream of killing Sadat, while Ronald Reagan would do away with him as soon as he had outlived his usefulness. This sort of attitude gives one little confidence in this author.

Along similar lines, Heikal argues that "the forces which conspired against Sadat were just as much a part of the mainstream in Egyptian society as were the forces which overthrew the Shah from the mainstream in Iran." Heikal thus equates a nationwide movement that included millions of people with what he himself calls a conspiracy of four isolated and violent fanatics, operating in darkest secrecy. In his effort to condemn everything associated with Sadat, Heikal ends up justifying any force that opposed him, even his killers.

A polemic written with the single-minded purpose of destroying a man's reputation cannot be relied upon as biography. Parts of *Autumn of Fury* may be true, to be sure, but how can the reader tell which ones? Rather than guess mistakenly, he would do better to ignore Mohamed Heikal's angry testimony and await a more solid account.

Holding the Center

THE WAR OVER THE FAMILY: CAPTURING THE MIDDLE GROUND. By BRIGITTE BERGER and PETER L. BERGER. *Anchor Press/Doubleday. 252 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by RITA KRAMER

RESPECTERS and defenders of the much-maligned traditional family should take pleasure in this book. For it is the aim of the sociologists Brigitte and Peter L. Berger to define here a position for reasonable people who feel comfortable with the extremes of neither Right nor Left in the current battle over the role of the family in American society. They identify three major camps in the struggle. One, made up of militant feminists, homosexual activists, and redistributive egalitarians, calls for radical change in what it perceives as an obsolete or actually destructive institution. A second—Middle Americans, members of the business community, and many religious groups—takes an old-fashioned "pro-family" position. Finally, there are the professionals and bureaucrats of the new "knowledge class" who along with their diagnosis offer their own cures.

Although the Bergers make no secret of their own partisanship in favor of the traditional middle-class family, they proceed in proper sociological fashion by characterizing the various ideological positions taken by the contending camps as reflecting conflicts between classes with different values and different interests to protect. They are particularly good at revealing the inherent paradoxes in some of these positions. Ever-increasing areas of publicly-funded social-welfare programs, for instance, have resulted in a disenfranchisement of the family by professionals and government bureaucrats pledged to protect it. The family has grown steadily weaker in precisely the period in which professionals have been most involved with it, leading the Bergers "to the awful suspicion that the professionally prescribed reme-

RITA KRAMER *is the author of* In Defense of the Family *(Basic Books).*

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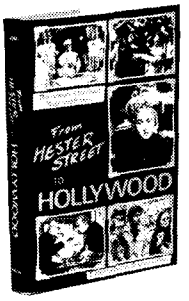

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dies may actually be part of the disease."

Another key paradox identified by the Bergers is that the very values inherent in the traditional family ethos may germinate, if they do not actually sow, the seeds of its destruction. They see the bourgeois family as the source of attitudes and virtues—individuality and privacy, enterprise, thrift, discipline, moral propriety—which prepared the ground for Western industrial modernization. The chief business of the family throughout the 19th century was the rearing of children educated in these middle-class virtues, an education that took place in a religious context which provided a certain balance between individualism and responsibility. With the loss of that balance in recent times we have seen the middle-class family's contributions to modernity carried to extremes that can destroy the family itself, as in the neo-bohemian counterculture of the 60's (which originated among the children of the affluent bourgeoisie), the narcissism of the "liberated" woman with no commitment to husband, home, or children, or the potentially damaging professionalism of the "expert" armed with bureaucratic powers. Today, the Bergers point out, the family ethic persists most strongly not in the middle class in which it originated but in the working classes upon which it was historically foisted by reformers.

THE secret of the traditional family, the Bergers suggest, was in the balance it struck between what was owed the self and what was owed the community. It functioned as a "mediating structure" linking the individual and the institutions of society. Its shared values, its rules for conduct in private as well as public life, provided the basis for a consensus that was in turn necessary to insure the continuity of society. All this, they write, remains true and valid for us today. It is the family that provides the sense of community that can link the disparate elements of a pluralistic society. In defining a centrist position in support of the family the Bergers hope to contribute to the possibility of a shared national ethos.

Their recommendations are modest but, by that token, within the realm of possibility. They see not only that public policy is limited in its capacity to do good, but also that, even with the best of intentions, it is able to do harm. In line with this they call for a moratorium on interventionist programs that tend to redefine previously private matters as public concerns. As a means of encouraging the confidence of families in their own ability to act for themselves, the Bergers support the voucher concept in education and suggest extending the concept to other areas of social services as well. They support parental rights—"*not* over children's rights, which are usually not the real issue," but over the claims of the professionals who step in presumably to represent the "best interests" of children in such areas as teenage sexual activity, birth control, and abortion. In matters involving both a great deal of human suffering and very little real knowledge, such as abortion, they would keep public-policy strictures to the minimum. And where individual families are no longer able to cope, they suggest turning to other mediating structures—churches, community and neighborhood organizations—before having recourse to professional or bureaucratic agencies of government. In general, they argue, public policy would serve families better by empowering them to help themselves than by empowering others to do the job for them.

THE Bergers write that "in a world that seems to become ever more complex and abstract and uncontrollable, Americans continue to look on the family as the most significant and lasting reality in their lives." They know that, left alone to do so, most people in this country continue to marry, have children, take care of them, and work for their futures pretty much as they have always done. One can only applaud and be grateful to the Bergers for declining to write yet another modish epitaph to the American family, and for offering instead a thoughtful program for its enhancement and support.

While asserting, however, that the traditional family is uniquely able to meet both the basic needs of the individual in the early years of life and the basic needs of a free democratic society, and while marshaling historical and sociological evidence to buttress their case, the Bergers seem unable or unwilling to go further—to say just why it is that the human requirements for stability and love in infancy are best provided by the family, and best achieved within the family (rather than in, say, a day-care center).

One suspects this is because to do so would involve them in psychoanalytic concepts of child development and character formation, a prospect with which they seem uncomfortable. The result is that in their frequent references to psychological "experts," they fail to distinguish clearly between the serious and the faddish. Yet psychoanalytic observation and theory provide the most useful idea we have of how and why a sense of who we are and what we owe to others develops in relation to one's early feelings toward one's parents. By begging the question of the relation of private and public morality to family experience, the Bergers omit an important dimension of the evidence for the truth of their contention.

Where the Bergers' stance as academic sociologists serves them well is in identifying historical relationships and defining present trends. Where it serves them ill is in a tone of assumed objectivity and even-handedness that can sometimes sound superior or condescending. ("We will not conceal our serious reservations with regard to each one of these camps"; "We have learned to become more conscious of the middle-class bias inherent in much writing about the family.") Before they can conclude that "there is no viable alternative to the bourgeois family for the raising of children who will have a good chance of becoming responsible and autonomous individuals," they feel called upon to say, "We are conscious of the bourgeois family's sociohistorical relativity, and we do not wish to absolutize it in an ideologically conservative manner." Such disclaimers are perhaps par for the academic course these days,

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but still it is a pity to see two such forthright critics having to resort to them.

These reservations aside, however, what Brigitte and Peter Berger have done is to provide a solid intellectual case for the traditional family. They make clear the connection between the ideals of the middle-class family and those of a free society and suggest policies to strengthen the latter by encouraging the former. The authority of their argumentation and the plausibility of their proposals serve to remind us all that if the family is in trouble, we would do well to think carefully before abandoning it to its enemies and detractors.

Origins

THE SACRED EXECUTIONER: HUMAN SACRIFICE AND THE LEGACY OF GUILT. By HYAM MACCOBY. *Thames and Hudson. 208 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ROBERT ALTER

THIS is a venturesome, provocative book that seeks first to uncover the archaic origins of certain central expressions of biblical religion and then to explain the anti-Jewish bias of Christianity, both early and late, as a swerve back into the archaic. Half the book is devoted to the Hebrew Bible, with most of the attention given to Genesis; four chapters take the argument into the New Testament; another three then follow the Christian sacrificial myth as it bears on the Jews through the Middle Ages to our own period.

The polemic with Christianity, which traces an unbroken line from the accusation of the Jews in the Gospels through their subsequent stigmatization as pariahs to the horrors of modern genocide, is vigorously outspoken, and has earned the book a good deal of critical abuse, especially in the British reviews. "In Christianity," Maccoby characteristically charges, contrasting the distance at which the Hebrew Bible sets memories of human sacrifice with the way the New Testament embodies them in its myth of the murdered son, "the age-long Jewish process of sublimation disappears as if in a sudden bout of psychosis. We are back at the primitive level at which the abyss opens and panic requires a victim."

Maccoby draws on a variety of theories about foundation-sacrifices and the displacement of human by animal sacrifice that have been current in both anthropological and biblical studies for a good many decades, and he puts these together with a degree of ingenuity to which my summary here will scarcely do justice. As historical explanation, however, this book is an extended exercise in conjuring with the un-

ROBERT ALTER, *a contributing editor of* COMMENTARY, *is professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at Berkeley. His most recent books are* The Art of Biblical Narrative *and* Motives for Fiction, *which Harvard will be publishing early next year.*

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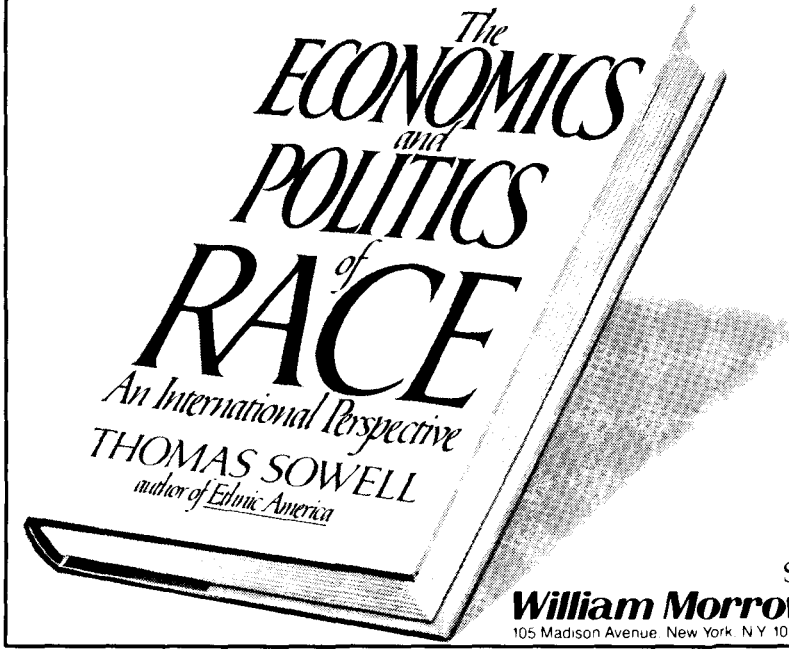

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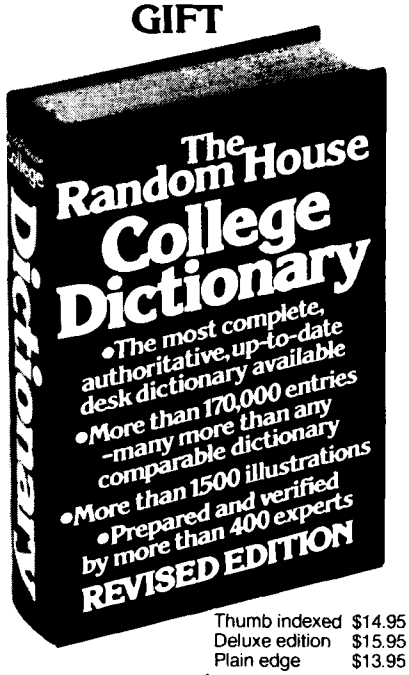
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Or, On Religious Power and Judaism

MOSES MENDELSSOHN

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verified, and in that regard it unfortunately represents a characteristic project of modern inquiry into Judaism and Christianity, as I shall try to explain.

The figure of the Sacred Executioner appears, according to Maccoby, in both myth and ritual as an expression of guilt or ambivalence over the necessity for human sacrifice. In the most archaic stage, which is a matriarchal society, the sexual consort of the queen is killed and dismembered, his blood and limbs scattered across the fields to fructify them, the whole homicidal rite being accepted as a proper moment in the annual cycle of the renewal of life. In the subsequent, patriarchal stage, which would be, approximately, the era immediately antecedent to the Bible, human sacrifice becomes an "expression of submission to an angry male god," one typical form being the foundation-sacrifice, where a first-born son is killed and buried in the foundations of the walls of a city or house to assure its future well-being. This stage of human sacrifice induces guilt in the community that is implicated in the sacrifice, and so a surrogate is invented to bear the burden of the guilt: the man who has been appointed by lot or birth or fate to immolate the victim is driven into the desert, made an accursed wanderer, and yet also endowed with an aura of sanctity or inviolability for having carried out the terrible deed that the community needed in order to survive. In the Bible, Cain is the prototype of this figure, his fratricide being a version of human sacrifice merely masked by the Hebrew writer in monotheistic moral terms. In the central Christian myth, the Jews—and quite pointedly, not the Romans—become collectively the Sacred Executioner, in the course of time losing, for a variety of reasons Maccoby proposes, the shield of inviolability (the "mark of Cain") and retaining only the guilty pariah status.

Now, even before we glance at any of the texts in which Maccoby tries to anchor this theory, certain difficulties suggest themselves. Has it really been established historically that there was a matriarchal age of the sort Maccoby imagines before the patriarchal age? More crucially, is there persuasive evidence that ancient child-sacrificers felt much guilt over the act, as we moderns imagine they ought to have done? In the Book of Judges, Jephthah is devastated when he has to sacrifice his only daughter in consequence of his own imprudent vow, but that is because he has to cut off his posterity, and the story does not really suggest he felt guilt for what he was about to do. Thomas Mann in *Joseph and His Brothers,* having read some of the same historical studies as Maccoby, invents a foundation-sacrifice of a first-born son offered by Laban and set into the walls of his Mesopotamian home; but, in what is probably a more accurate representation of the ancient mind, he nowhere intimates that Laban felt guilty for the deed, only regretful that he had deprived himself of male offspring. Unless one can posit this mainspring of guilt about human sacrifice, the tension of attitudes—pariah over against holy figure—that creates the Sacred Executioner collapses.

TURNING to the biblical texts with this hypothesis, Maccoby produces a variety of startling and sometimes fascinating readings about which one can say that if only a few are clearly refutable, none is susceptible of demonstration. Working from the barest hints in the etymology or morphology of names or in the formal deployment of genealogies in Genesis, Maccoby, following still another venerable conjecture of biblical research, concludes that

> the biblical chronicle of the generations before the Flood is based on a chronicle of the line of Cain only. Such a chronicle must have come from a tribe to whom Cain was a revered ancestor. The tribe must be the Kenites, who were called after Cain and among whom his was a royal or priestly name. We conclude, therefore, that the Israelite writers who compiled the early chapters of Genesis used as one of their main sources a Kenite saga, which recounted the sacred history of the Kenite tribe, tracing it back to its ancestor, Cain.

The use of "must" and "there-

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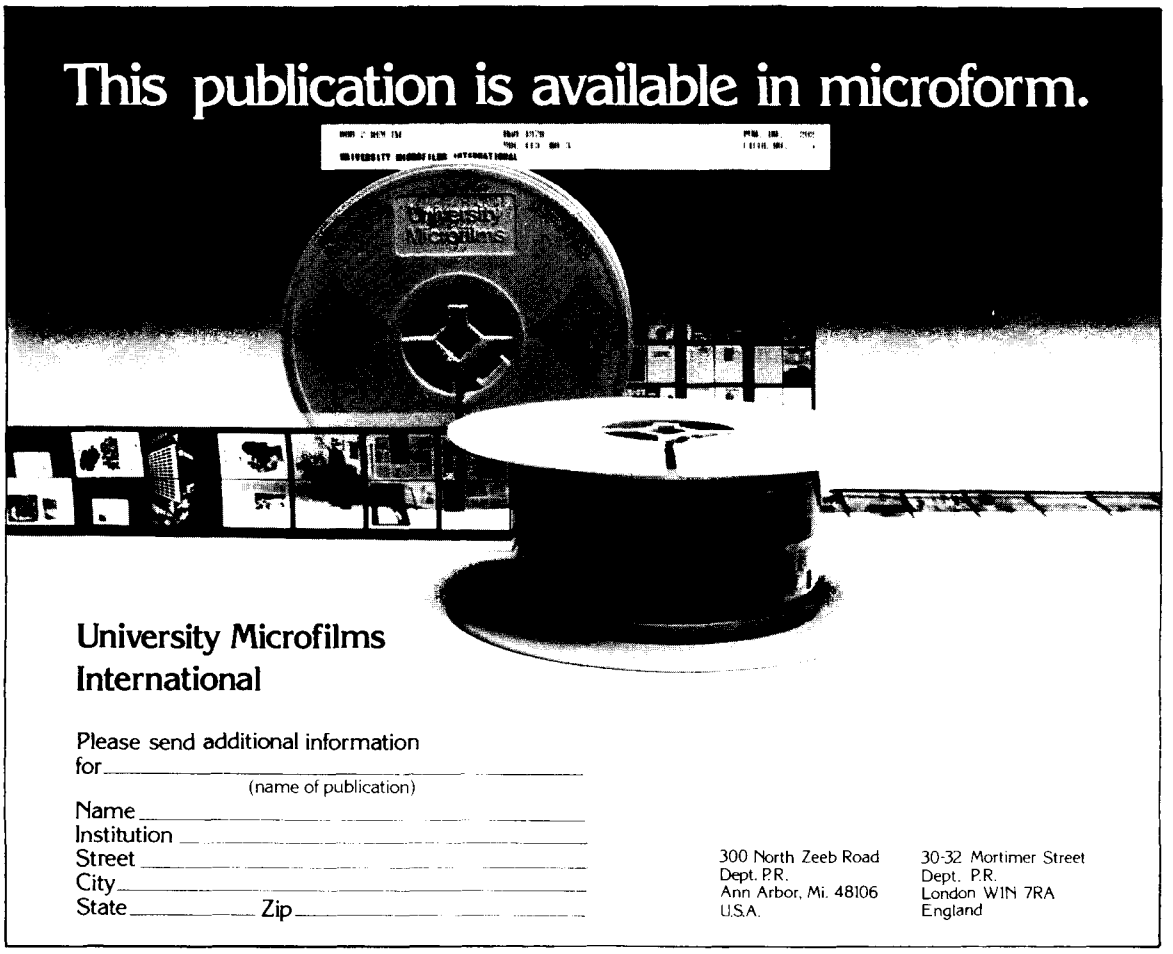
fore" here (and, indeed, throughout the book) is surely a little unsettling. In passage after passage, a conjecture is proposed, based on necessarily fragmentary and imperfect evidence. Then the conjecture is assumed as established fact and other conjectures are built on it, to become in turn the ground for still further conjectures. Again and again, we are told what can be discerned "beneath the surface picture," or "what lies behind the monotheistic and civilized surface of the Bible." By stages, the actual text of the Bible, which has, after all, certain decipherable meanings, dissolves into the supposed Kenite saga and into an imagined preworld of murdered sons whose sacrificers are driven into the wilderness. The most surprising figures, events, and institutions turn out to be "masks" or "displacements" of human sacrifice. Lamech reciting his cryptic victory chant to his wives in Genesis 4 is really explaining to them why he had to sacrifice their child, in order to found the world again after the Flood (he being, in this elaborate reconstruction, the "Kenite Noah"). The ritual of the scapegoat driven into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement is merely an animal translation of the fate of the Sacred Executioner. And, of course, circumcision is a transparent substitution for child sacrifice.

Some texts are painfully forced in order to sustain these notions. Thus, when in the enigmatic story of the Bridegroom of Blood (Exodus 4:24-26), the text says, "the Lord met him and sought to kill him," Maccoby interprets the verb "to meet," *pagosh*, on utterly farfetched philological grounds, as "afflicted him with divine madness." In this fashion, he can cast Moses in the temporary role of frenzied Sacred Executioner about to slaughter his own son, with the future lawgiver, in a syntactic improbability, made the subject of the verb "sought" and his son Gershom the object. Equally disconcerting is Maccoby's predisposition to cite from the Midrash certain stories that happen to jibe with his theory and then to claim that they "derive from a period earlier than the composition of the Hebrew Bible, and . . . were excluded from the Bible because of their primitivism but survived in popular tradition." This is, admittedly, at least possible, but, as elsewhere, the criterion for evidence in trying to demonstrate the undemonstrable seems to be the conformity of the data with the initial hypothesis.

Maccoby, as I have intimated, is far from being alone in this enterprise of sweeping conjecture about the shadowy past. It is an imaginative project that has its roots in European Romanticism: the attempt to get at the truth, the vital essence, of things by pushing back to ultimate origins, to some powerful *Urwelt* masked by the world we actually inhabit. Presumably, one gets back to origins by a leap of the imagination (as in some of the Romantic poets) or by patient analysis of shards and traces. But after



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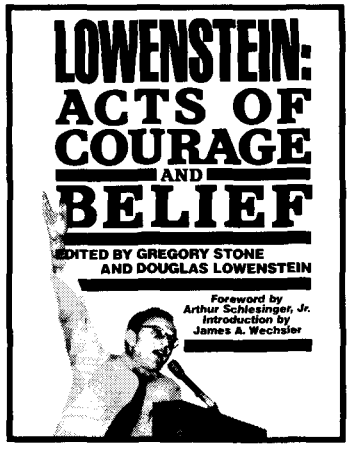
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more than a century of such experiments in historical research, the stubborn fact of the matter is that ultimate origins remain inaccessible.

Especially in the realm of biblical scholarship, the many and diverse analysts who claimed to recover determinative origins have proved to be more poets than historians, and poets of a peculiarly extravagant and obsessive kind. Having all eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, we can scarcely help wondering about what came before the first things tradition has given us, but it behooves us not to mistake our own suggestive fictions for historical explanation.

Of Men and Markets

DANGEROUS CURRENTS: THE STATE OF ECONOMICS. By LESTER C. THUROW. *Random House. 247 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by
A. LAWRENCE CHICKERING

LESTER C. THUROW first became visible in 1972 as chief economic adviser to George McGovern. Since the publication of his book *The Zero Sum Society* several years ago, he has made a strong bid to succeed John Kenneth Galbraith as the Left's favorite economist. In his latest book, *Dangerous Currents: The State of Economics,* Thurow searches for solutions to our recent economic malaise and issues a fundamental challenge—criticizing the economics profession for pretending to know more than it does, and attacking the very basis of modern economics. His challenge has attracted a great deal of attention, and is especially interesting because of the favorable notices it has received from two leading conservatives, William F. Buckley, Jr. and Irving Kristol.

Most economists, surveying the persistence of our broad problems (low growth, unemployment, inflation), and trying to understand wherein the failures lie, would focus not on the workings of separate, individual markets—the province of microeconomics—but on macroeconomics, the way the tens of thousands of separate markets aggregate into the whole, how they add up. Thurow disagrees. He argues that the failures in recent policy result from flaws not in macroeconomic theory, but in the underlying theory of individual markets.

Thurow takes the heart of microeconomic theory to be what he calls the equilibrium price-auction model. In this model, he writes,

> every market is a price-auction market that clears based on competitive bidding within a framework of supply and demand. Accordingly, any market is always in equilibrium, having no unsatisfied bidders, and every individual is a maximizer in his decisions to consume and produce. . . . In equilibrium price-auction markets, it is impossible to find over- or under-employed resources.

As prices equalize supply (which reflects incremental costs) and demand (which reflects incremental value to consumers), resources are allocated to their most valuable uses. Most important, according to Thurow, these market adjustments are believed by most economists to occur in a fairly fluid way, unobstructed by rigidities.

Thurow argues that the principal attraction of the price-auction model is its deterministic certainty—a certainty that can be codified and quantified in higher mathematics (which is the business of econometrics). But this is also its fatal flaw; economics cannot achieve such scientific certainty, both because it lacks constants (such as the speed of light in physics) and because its subjects, human beings, are always free to change their behavior. In basing their observations and calculations on the extremely rationalist and individualist *homo economicus,* Thurow writes, economists fail to understand *homo sapiens,* who is strongly influenced by the interrelationships and interdependencies that become evident in group behavior.

Thurow's critique of the price-

A. LAWRENCE CHICKERING, *executive director of the Institute for Contemporary Studies in San Francisco, is currently writing a book on the intellectual Left.*

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auction model is the major theme running through this book. At various points he does acknowledge that no one really believes in the model in the extreme form in which he describes it, but such acknowledgments are rare. Using the extreme model as his point of reference, he proceeds to analyze monetarism, Keynesianism, supply-side economics, "rational-expectations" theory, and traditional labor economics, as well as the shattered remains of attempts to build large econometric forecasting models.

THUROW begins by reviewing the sorry economic record of the past decade, with its unhappy combination of stagnation, rising unemployment, and rising inflation, as well as the OPEC boycott and rapidly rising energy prices. According to Thurow, price-auction economists had no solutions to any of these problems, especially inflation, which, he writes,

> does not matter in the standard model of behavior. Only relative prices—the price of one kind of goods in terms of another—matter. Accordingly, because a general increase in the price level does not affect relative prices in the equilibrium price-auction model, there is no theoretical reason for eschewing inflation. Yet the same price-auction economists are often the foremost proponents of the position that society should take drastic action to stop inflation.

Thurow devotes a chapter to exploring issues related to the use of stringent monetary and fiscal policies in order to control inflation. He criticizes the monetarists for placing excessive faith in the ability to control nominal GNP by controlling the money supply. He also explores the factors that prevent rapid market adjustments, including what he calls "supply-side inflation," whereby multi-year contracts, indexed wages, and the like sustain upward pressure on prices and thus delay the market's ability to moderate inflation without large increases in unemployment. These rigidities explain the attractions of "incomes policies" which would control wages in an attempt to moderate the unemployment otherwise associated with reducing inflation. Unfortunately, the economy is too complex for anyone to implement an incomes policy without causing the shortages associated with other forms of price controls.

In Thurow's view, Reagan-style supply-side economics "represents the triumph of literal and unqualified equilibrium price-auction economics," especially in the claim that the increased output resulting from a tax cut would yield new tax revenues exceeding the revenue lost from the tax cut. No evidence was adduced for this claim, and hindsight reveals it to have been dramatically wrong.

If the supply-siders are overly optimistic about opportunities to improve the economy's performance, the so-called rational-expectations theorists exhibit the opposite failing. They argue that the government's ability either to harm the economy or to improve it is extremely limited since private individuals anticipate the future impact of government decisions, change their behavior accordingly, and thus cancel the effect. If the federal deficit rises, a rational-expectations economist would reason, people will save more to anticipate increased future taxes, in this way canceling any stimulative effect relating to the increased deficit as well as any net effect on lendable funds available to the private sector. This analysis, according to Thurow, is supported by little empirical evidence.

When it comes to labor economics, Thurow turns to the rigidities that maintain persistently high rates of unemployment despite the predictions of the price-auction model that wages will fall and thus guarantee full employment. Labor unions are one factor here, but their members constitute only 20 percent of the work force. Other factors include those "group effects" —including consideration for the general morale of the work force— that discourage employers from setting wages at the lowest point necessary to attract workers. Setting wages above the "market-clearing

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level" (defined as the point where the number of workers seeking jobs exactly equals the number of jobs) means less than full employment in individual firms—contrary to the model.

In his conclusion, Thurow stresses the need for economists to be humble about what they know and do not know. In particular he calls for a fundamental rethinking of the equilibrium price-auction model, and for the incorporation into economics of insights about human needs from other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and political science.

THIS book is lively, well-written, and provocative, but several fundamental flaws render it unlikely to have any real impact on the economics profession.

The major problem with Thurow's thesis, already alluded to, is that no competent economist believes in the perfectly fluid price-auction model that he describes. This creates difficulties all along the line. Take the following statement about monetarism: "According to monetarist theory, a cut in the money supply reduces real economic activity in the short run, but since prices are assumed to be flexible, real economic activity quickly returns to its natural (full-employment) level." If monetarists truly believed that real output returned "quickly" to its natural level, they would have no reason to oppose abrupt changes in monetary policy. Yet this is the very heart of the current monetarist critique of the policy of the Federal Reserve Board over the past several years—a wildly fluctuating policy that monetarists argue has produced the greatest instability in both interest rates and economic activity of any comparable time in the postwar period.

In his chapter on supply-side economics, Thurow similarly oversimplifies by focusing on extreme positions while avoiding mention of more moderate alternatives. Although his criticisms of supply-siders like Arthur Laffer and Jude Wanniski are well taken, he gives no serious attention to mainstream economists like Martin Feldstein and Michael Boskin, who are also concerned with providing incentives to work, save, and invest. In fact, this concern is so widely shared that it formed the basis of several unanimous reports of the Joint Economic Committee of Congress under the chairmanship of Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D., Texas) *before* Ronald Reagan was elected President. To limit oneself to the ideas of some who have boasted about never receiving any formal economic training seems irresponsible if not tendentious.

Thurow also oversimplifies when he fails to separate the economic dimensions of policy from the political. This is particularly evident in his discussion of the Reagan economic program, where he completely ignores the complicated political forces influencing the program's ultimate shape, which was very different from what the President initially proposed to Congress. The whole program is described as the creation of economists, as if conceived in an institutional and political vacuum. Moreover, by neglecting to distinguish between, for example, Milton Friedman's support for the Kemp-Roth tax-cut bill and Arthur Laffer's, he gives the reader no basis on which to understand the complex considerations that underlay different experts' evaluation of the program.

Frequently, Thurow advances arguments in a tone that suggests he is the first person to have thought of them, yet in some cases they represent ideas very widely held. His failure to credit other people is especially striking in the light of his complaint that economists are "too certain about what they think they . . . know." In the specific case of Keynesian "fine-tuning," for instance, this is precisely what monetarists have been saying over the past three decades. Compare Milton Friedman, writing in 1969:

> Is fiscal policy being oversold? Is monetary policy being oversold? I want to stress that my answer is yes to both of those questions. I believe monetary policy is being oversold; I believe fiscal policy is being oversold. What I believe is that fine tuning has been oversold.

IN THE past it has often been the Right that has stressed the limits of economic knowledge and the consequent need to reduce the discretionary power of government policymakers. In this book, Thurow seems to align himself with the skeptics. Yet it is difficult to square this skepticism with his repeated intimations of sympathy for central economic planning—as when he blames economists for their failure to solve essentially political problems (such as those concerning energy and the environment), when he emphasizes the importance of group values that are unreflected in market outcomes, and when he opposes the monetary and fiscal stringency necessary to curb inflation. I call these "intimations" because in this book Thurow curiously avoids any explicit endorsement of economic planning. Indeed, considering the importance the Left has attached to central planning, this avoidance is perhaps the book's most significant ideological statement. But Thurow's failure to endorse what is everywhere between the lines contaminates the discussion with an odor of disingenuousness.

Both liberals and conservatives are rightly disturbed by the commitment of professional economists to something called "rational individual utility maximization," an idea that seems to imply indifference to the content and substance of the good life (what has come to be known as the "quality of life"). In reality, however, "utility maximization" is only a fancy, if creepily depersonalized, way of saying individual free choice. It is all well and good to criticize economists for their apparent lack of concern for what constitutes the good life, but much too easy to forget that its pursuit is made possible only through the preservation of free choice.

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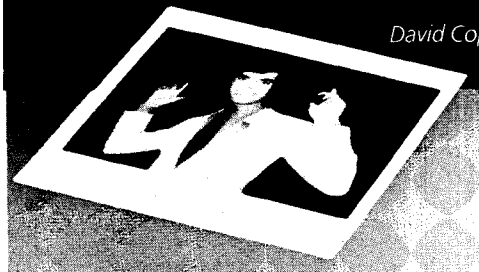

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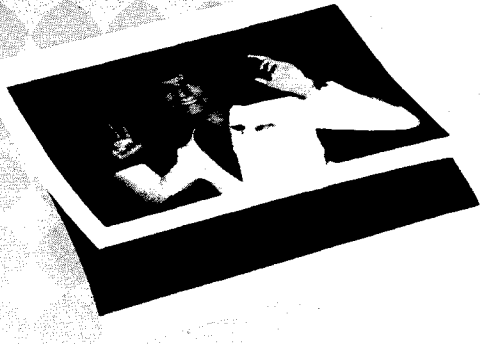

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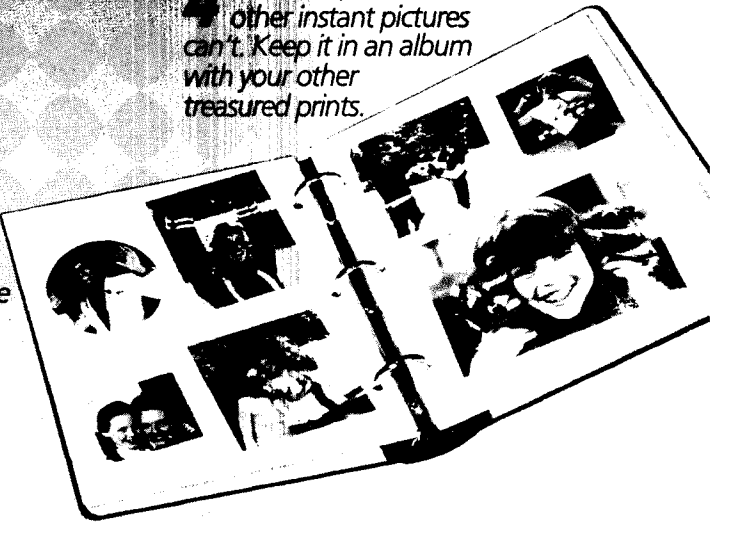

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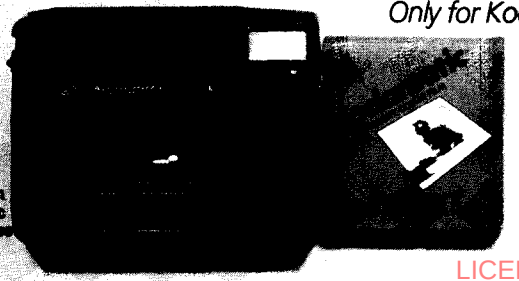

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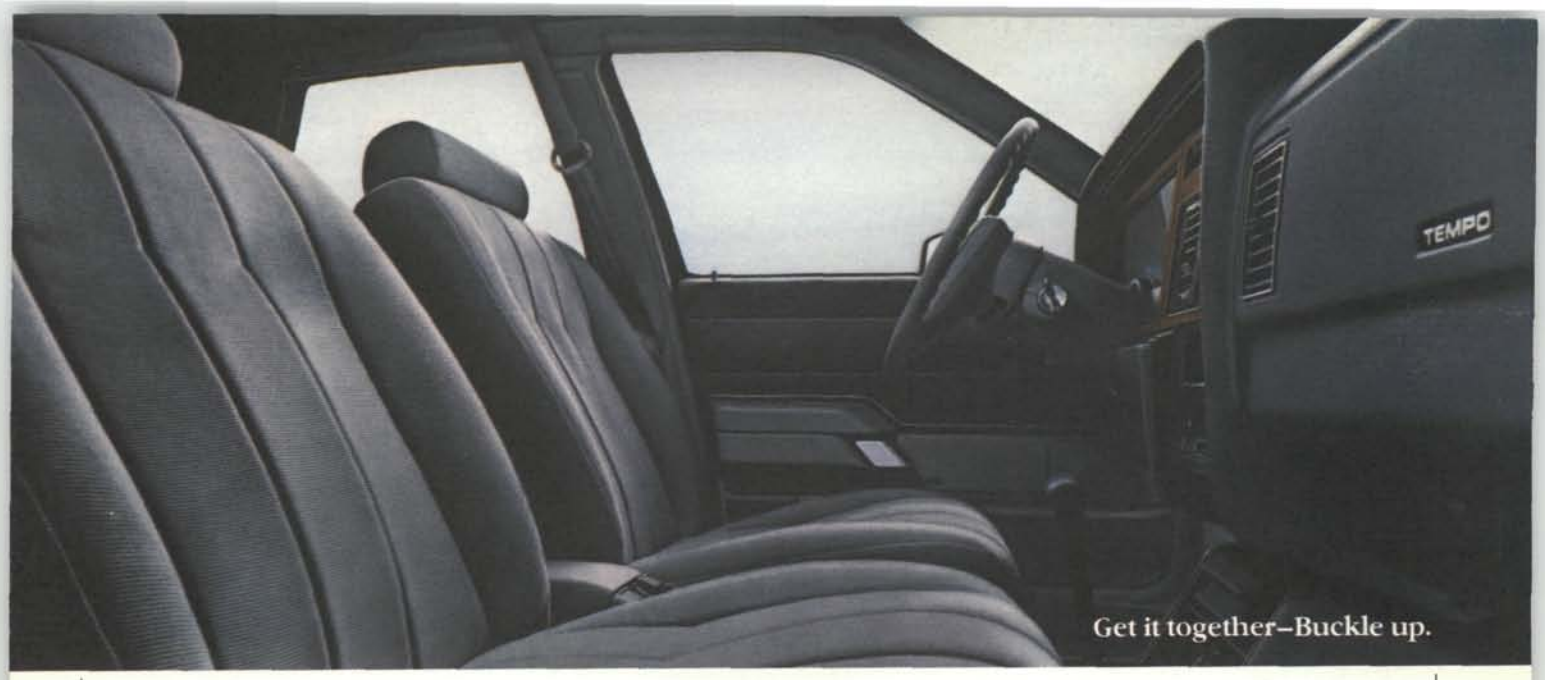

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